THE GUIDE TO COMICS • 56 SHI! Q & A WITH BILLY TUCCI

WIZARD®

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APRIL 1996

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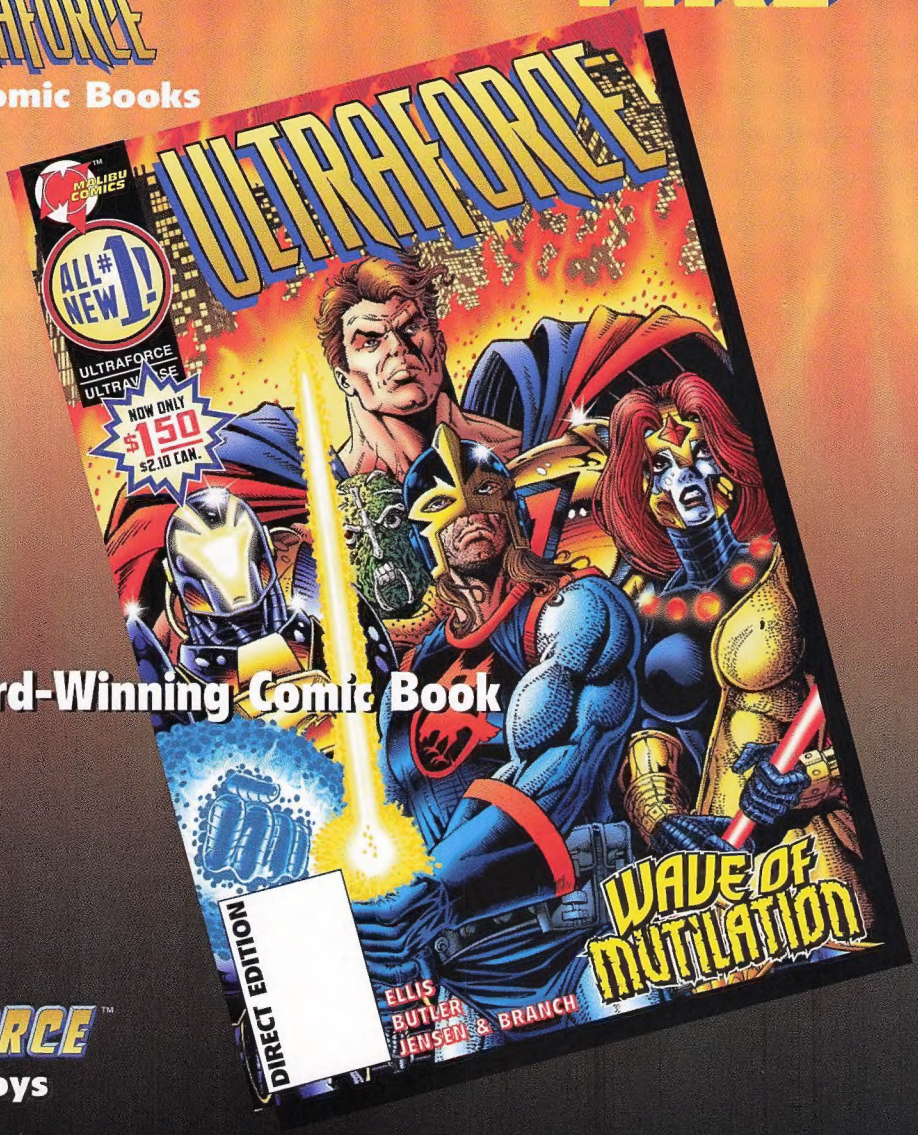

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GOOD EEFNING AND VELCOME TO VIZARD! I VOULD LIKE...HUH, WHAT HUMP?

Paul Schiraldi

BECAUSE YOU DEMANDED IT!

This issue of *Wizard* includes many new ideas that we've been searching for and working on for a long time. Finally, we have the chromium cards back every month. And each month we will try to bring you a **new** chromium technology. This month, it's a ClearChrome Angela card by Greg Capullo.

Next month, we have an embossed chromium Purgatori card by Chaos! Comics, plus lots of other new technologies like die-cut, and double-sided chrome. Just wait till you see what's coming next...

We also have the poster back after an incredible avalanche of mail. This month it's Dark Claw by Gary Frank. Every month on the back of the poster there will be a really cool calendar from artist Brian Douglas Ahern, best known for his "Bumpkin Buzz" comic strip in *Comics Buyer's Guide*. So you decide which side you want to hang up.

We also take an in-depth look at manga this month, examining the influx of Japanese comics' influence into the mainstream. You've got to check out Scott McCloud's "Understanding Manga" feature. The man that brought you the highly acclaimed *Understanding Comics* book comes his unique insight into the world of manga.

John Byrne also makes his debut with his monthly opinion column on the world of comics. From X-Men to Wonder Woman to She-Hulk, Byrne has seen and done it all. His opinions promise to be controversial and thought-provoking.

Also, "Comic Watch" has a new home and a new name. It is now called "Buried Treasure" and can be found in alternating spots in the price guide.

The *Lady Rawhide* #1/2 is only available this month in *Wizard* (and never again), so make sure you collect all of the #1/2s. Hey, you never know...

And lastly, we've added a Bisque (statue) Price Guide. Some of those shot up in value—glad I collected them. In the coming months, keep an eye out for *Wizard*'s Hollywood Poster Price Guide. Hey, some of those things are worth a lot. I'm going to hurry up and get a few myself. (Especially Buzz from "Toy Story," which is getting quite a bit of buzz itself these days).

Over the last few months, we've put lots of great new stuff in *Wizard*. I've been getting some excellent feedback, so make sure you let me know what you think too (write or e-mail me at GarebS@aol.com).

See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

P.S. Next month we've got a contest where you and 50 of your friends can view a private screening of "The Crow: City of Angels." Bring your own Goobers.

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WIZARD

Number 56
APRIL 1996

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(LOOKIE! It's John Byrne's new monthly column!)

EXCLUSIVE OFFER

64 **LADY RAWHIDE #1/2**
Howdy, pardner! This here's your only chance to get the barnstormin' Lady Rawhide #1/2 comic, featuring that rip-roarin', whip-snappin' redhead herself!

MAGIC WORDS

I'm Back!

After a one-month...uh...let's call it a "rest" at an unnamed rehabilitation facility, I've returned to "Magic Words." I'd like to take this moment to thank Kathy Newman for the outstanding pinch-hitting work she did last month. She really did the job.

Okay, we're done. Let the snide comments begin anew.

This whole Star Wars/Star Trek thing has turned into an absolute full-blown gonzo-whopper letters page to-do. It's bigger than "Should Spidey have killed Carnage?" It's bigger than "Iron Man vs. the X-Men." It's bigger than "Gareb Shamus: boxers or panties?" We got literally *hundreds* of letters in response to the letters in support of Star Wars or Star Trek that ran in issue #52. Our leadoff man this month proposes a nice compromise. Our second man up proposes a not-so-nice compromise...

Trek Wars

Dear Jim,

Hi! Hope you're having a less hateful month of mail. I'd like to try to end the ugly controversy over whether Star Wars is better than Star Trek or vice versa. Simply put, they're both great.

I'd like to suggest that the obviously dedicated fans on both sides stop and examine why it is they feel that to love one, they must hate the other. Fans often seem to feel obligated to hate the nearest competition in a favored genre. Relax. You can love both. Thinking the Voyager and its adventures are cool does not insult the Millennium Falcon. Or vice versa.

As Luke Skywalker himself once said, "Let go of your hate." You'll probably have more fun that way.

Jeremy Sung
Los Angeles, CA

Now there's a calm, reasoned, right-thinking man. And now here's somebody else...

Dear Jim,

As I was looking at the results of this year's Halloween Costume Contest in *Wizard* #52, I was disappointed that Paula from Indianapolis (*Wizard* #40's Vampirella) was nowhere to be seen.

Anyway, enough of that. On to my next point. In response to that annoying Star Wars/Star Trek debate, I have only one thing to say: They both suck! Only pocket protector-wearing dorks would watch either of them!

And last but not least, I LOVE the X-Files!

Corey Kahn
Pembroke Pines, FL

So Star Wars and Star Trek are for "pocket protector-wearing dorks," but you just looooove the X-Files. So what's that make you? A higher grade of dork? Or maybe just a protractor-packin' UFO freak? Quit watching TV and get out on a Friday night sometime, Chumley.

Oh, yeah. Speaking of Paula from Indianapolis...

The Address of Your Dreams

Dear Wizard,

I wanted to write and say that I was very disappointed to miss this year's Halloween Costume Contest, but I have a great idea all ready to go for next year's contest. I've included pictures of what was intended to be my entry for this year (Razor), but due to circumstances beyond my control, I could not get my pictures in on time.

I've been very excited by the letters sent in to *Wizard* referencing me. If anyone would like to write me, feel free to send mail to the post office box listed below.

Paula
PO Box 53304
Indianapolis, IN 46253-0304

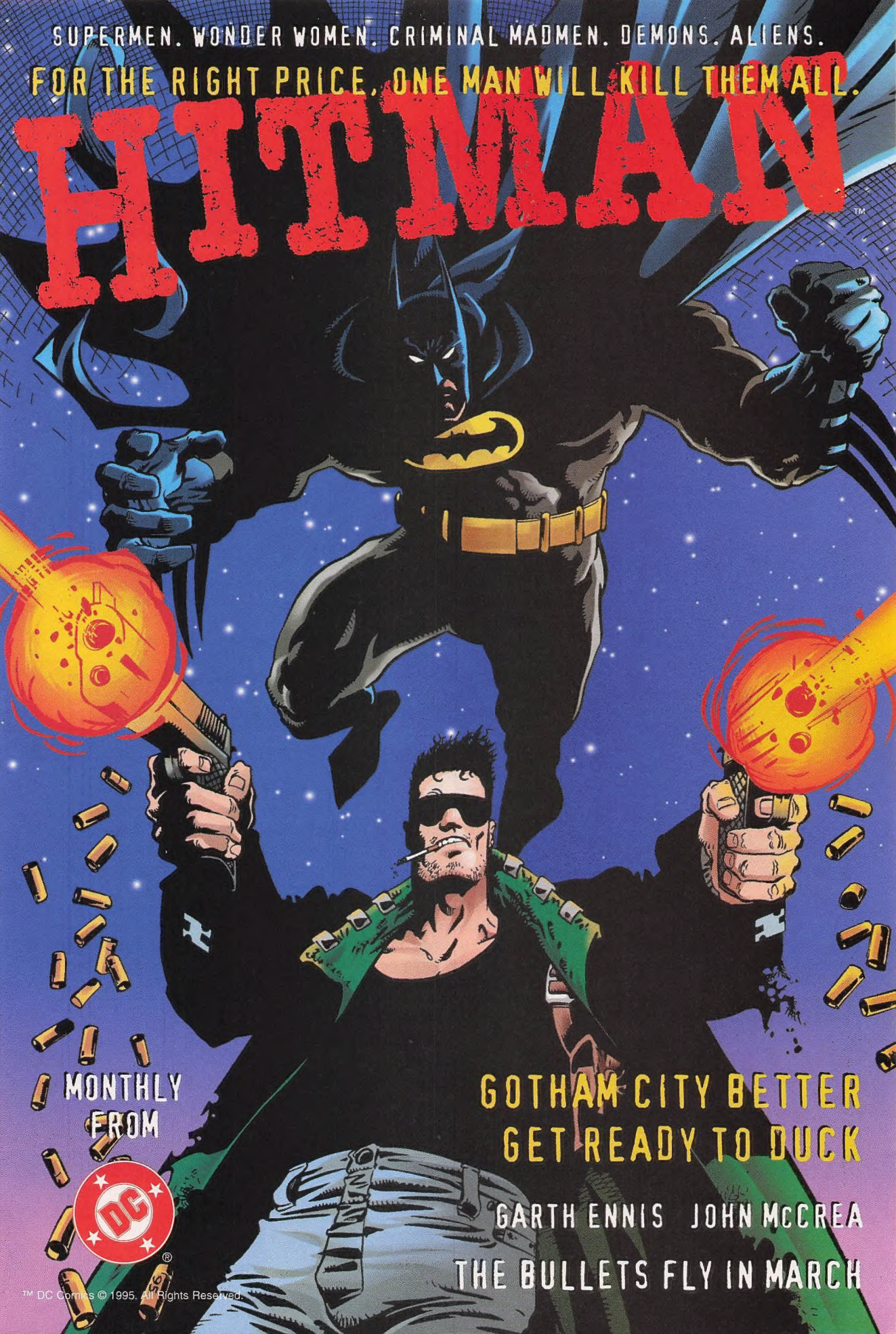
I called Paula (Yes, that does mean I have her home phone number. Think on this and drool wildly, Geeks of America.), to make sure she really wanted to go ahead with this and have her address published. She said yes. She's being a good sport in this, so all of you should be too. Paula awaits your mail, but let's keep it aboveboard (i.e., tasteful), okay? Selected entries may be forwarded to the F.B.I.

Comics: Literature or Drivel?

Dear Wizard Blokes,

Hey! Wasn't there some story a couple of years

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS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GARTH ENNIS JOHN McCREA
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ago where Neil Gaiman won some writing award and the entire literary community got angry or something like that?

Simon King
Orange, New South Wales, Australia

It's like this: In 1991 at the 13th annual World Fantasy Convention, Gaiman and artist Charles Vess were nominated for the H.P. Lovecraft Award for the best fantasy short story of the year. The work for which they were nominated was the "Midsummer Night's Dream" story that ran in* Sandman *#19. Much to the surprise of many in attendance, Gaiman, Vess and the comic story won. Much to the dismay of many in attendance, Gaiman, Vess and the comic story won. The rules of the award, as set by its governing body, were immediately changed so as to not allow comic books into the competition in the future, much less let them win, making said governing body—in my mind (and in the minds of many, many others)—a bunch of sorry old poops.

A Toast to Angela

Hey, Jim!

How about putting a bug or two in the ears of the people at Image Comics to get them to put out a new *Angela* title? Are these guys nuts? Don't they see the demand for that particular title? Correct me if I'm wrong, but if you have something that sells, something the public wants, you don't stop making it. Right? I'm willing to put my money where my mouth is. Dig, if you will, my demonstration:

Scenario A: I get an *Angela* title, and your fridge is full of Budweiser.

Scenario B: I don't get an *Angela* title, and your fridge is empty. Not even a Milwaukee's Best in sight.

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid

Paul Schiraldi

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this nor is there a prize.

The Comic Industry Needs a Swift Kick in the Butt

To the Huddled Masses Crying Out for Relief,

We, the members of the newly formed Get Rid of All that Crappy Entertainment (or G.R.A.C.E.), have noticed the steady decline of comic books as enjoyable reading material. We have come across several crucial points that we feel everyone must know. They are as follows:

1) This "Bad Girl" craze is simply "T&A." Kids, have your parents tell you what that means if you don't already know.

2) Aunt May died thinking some clone was her favorite nephew Peter, and that's just plain mean.

3) There is a *big* difference between writing a comic and not writing a comic that has your name in the title (e.g. *Neil Gaiman's Mr. Hero*).

4) It took Marvel five years to cancel *Guardians of the Galaxy.* Five years!

5) Marvel finally figured out that a good story and good art sell comics with the "Age of Apocalypse" storyline. We at G.R.A.C.E. salute Marvel on that one.

6) The creators of the Bravura line took the better part of forever in producing their projects. Perhaps not all creators are ready to leave the safety net that is a "real" comic company.

7) Todd McFarlane is not the be-all-to-end-all of the comic book industry. C'mon, he doesn't even draw *Spawn* anymore.

8) The "Charlie Don't Surf" T-shirt seen on Morphine Somers in *Doom 2099* should be produced commercially. We'd buy 'em.

9) The Tick is a true comic hero and the subject of the damn-funniest show on Saturday morning.

10) For those of you who don't know, *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* is, finally, a great new superhero comic book. Check it out!

Craig Hart, Doug Stuart, Spencer Lewerenz, Keith Haze
Irving, TX

You raise some good points, G.R.A.C.E. This whole "Bad Girl" thing does indeed equal simple T&A. I will challenge anyone who cares to make the argument (and that includes you, Brian Pulido): "Bad Girls" are not a genre. They are a bandwagon. There is some very good stuff out there that gets labeled "Bad Girls," but what it really is at essence is "very good stuff." As a label, "Bad Girls" is a bad one.

Mr. Hero is hardly a Neil Gaiman comic, even though it has his name on it. Astro City is truly outstanding stuff. And watching "The Tick" is the most fun I've ever had on a Saturday morning when fully clothed.

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Get in touch with your fellow comic fans! Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the Magic Words address on page 12. **NOTE: Please write your age clearly on the envelope.** Hey, make a friend!

P E N P A L S

Ryan Briggs
Age: 12 Sex: Male
44 Church St.
Wethersfield, CT 06109
Likes: All Spider-titles, *X-Man, Wolverine*

Joey Gibson
Age: 12 Sex: Male
6900 Greenwood Rd.
Louisville, KY 40258
Likes: All X-titles, *WildC.A.T.s, Fantastic Four*

Jon Muller
Age: 16 Sex: Male
33 Greenwood Rd.
Claremont 7700
Cape Town, South Africa
Likes: *Ambush Bug, Deathblow*

John Smith
Age: 15 Sex: Male
1168 Pleasant Way
Hanford, CA 93230
Likes: *X-Men, Uncanny X-Men, The Maxx*

Angel Brito
Age: 15 Sex: Male
50-29 63 St.
Woodside, NY 11377
Likes: *Spawn, Daredevil, X-Men*

James Roberts
Age: 13 Sex: Male
7635 Village Trail Dr.
Dallas, TX 75240
Likes: *Spawn, Pitt, Batman*

Karen Blankenship
Age: 22 Sex: Female
11535 E. Co. Rd. 800N
Seymour, IN 47274
Likes: *The X-Files*, all Anne Rice titles, *Archangels*

I think you hear me knockin'. I'm comin' and bringin' cold Budweiser for all! Just tell Image to bring the chips and a new *Angela.*

Glenn Newell
California, PA

California, Pennsylvania? Isn't that kind of a contradiction? Make up your mind, okay?

There is indeed Angela presence in this very issue, in the form of a nifty-neat Clear Chrome card found in the polybag. But for a ruling on a new Angela series, we had to appeal to Beau Smith, Todd McFarlane Productions' head of sales: "First of all, Todd McFarlane doesn't indulge in the manly art of drinking beer. He leaves that to me. Next, a fridge full of Bud don't cut it. It's gotta be the good stuff—Falls City Beer! This ain't no sissy beer commercial. This is real life, pal. So ante up, 'cause you'll be seein' Angela in a new series in late 1996."

Singin' the Blues

Dear Wizard,

Hey! What are bluelines?

Joey Lyle
Edgewood, NM

A blueline can be two things. "Bluelines" are film proofs sent to comic publishers (and publishers of all print media) just before something goes to press. They're an accurate representation of just what is on the film that is used to print a given piece (like a comic), and are used to make sure everything comes out and is laid out right.

"Blue lines" are also the two lines that mark the offensive zones on a hockey rink and are used by referees to call offsides penalties.

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Get Out of My Yard, Ya Damn Kids

Jim and Whoever Else Reads This,

In Marvel's *What The?!* #3, the artist who did the "Mutant Beach Party" story was a guy named Kyle Baker. Has he done any other comics? He's always been a favorite of mine.

Brian Abrams
Devil's Elbow, MO

I got in touch with Kyle Baker, perhaps most comic-famous for Piranha Press' Why I Hate Saturn, DC's 1987-88 Shadow series, and various Instant Piano

PENPALS

Jim Mitchell
Age: 20 Sex: Male
335 E. San Augustine #204
Deer Park, TX 77536
Likes: All Spider-titles (before Clone saga), *Gen*[13], *Batman*

Cary R. Enricks
Age: 20 Sex: Male
Chaplain Department
USS Kitty Hawk CV 63
FPO AP 96634-2770
Likes: *Wolverine, X-Men, Cyberforce*

Gloriann Irizarry Pérez
Age: 17 Sex: Female
PO Box 1106
Naguabo, PR 00718
Likes: All X-titles, *Gargoyles, Impulse*

Richely Ortiz
Age: 19 Sex: Male
PO Box 63
Cidra, PR 00739
Likes: *Spawn, Batman, X-Men*

Matthew Ortiz
Age: 14 Sex: Male
6251 Gregorio Ct.
Chino, CA 91710
Likes: *Gen*[13], *Avengelyne*, all X-titles

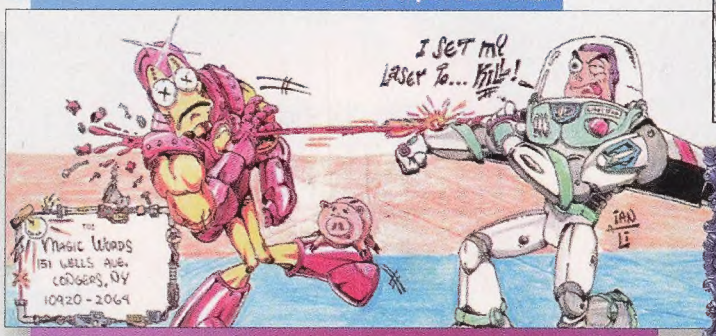
Maura Milan
Age: 11 Sex: Female
7139 W. Foster St.
Morton Grove, IL 60053
Likes: *X-Men, Generation X, Uncanny X-Men*

Waylon Walters
Age: 14 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 140
Lambert, MS 38643
Likes: *The X-Files, Batman, Spider-Man*

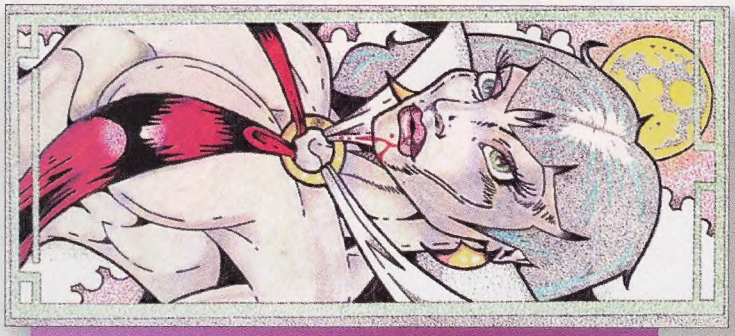
LETTER ART

Fans who get their letter art printed will each receive a copy of *Silver Surfer* #108 signed by Mike Lackey, a *Wizard Superman Tribute Edition* signed by Dan Jurgens, the issue of *Wizard* in which their envelope appeared signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins all that neat stuff, *plus* an original *Spectacular Scarlet Spider* #1 page by Sal Buscema and Jimmy Palmiotti. Artists: please include a clearly printed return address on the *back* of your envelope. And special thanks to our buddy Jimmy for donatin' that swell Grand Prize!

envelope of the month



IRON MAN VS. BUZZ LIGHTYEAR **Ian Anthony** Seattle, WA



VAMPIRELLA **Derrick Holloman** Nashville, NC

DR. STRANGE **Gustavo Vazquez** Springfield, VA

STORMWATCH **Travis J. Williams** Otsego, MN

stories with Dark Horse. Here's what he had to say via e-mail:

"I am officially retired from the comic book business. No more comic books from me will ever appear. EVER! I hope we are clear on this. I still do the occasional magazine piece. Most recently, my work has appeared in Vibe, Entertainment Weekly *and* Mad.

"Other than that, I keep a very low profile. I am a notorious hermit who rarely socializes and never answers the telephone. Anyone who tells you they've hung out with me in the last few years is probably a liar. Anyone who says they know me well is definitely a liar. You're lucky to get this much out of me, for I shun the spotlight."

So now you know.

Beyond Understanding

Dear Wizard,

In reference to the "Wizard Profile" question that appears in nearly every ish: Who in the ever-lovin' world is the Beyonder?

Michael Lanahan
Gaithersburg, MD
mlanahan@vt.edu

The Beyonder is a godlike being from another dimension (or perhaps more correctly, he is the whole dimension), who was a major character in the rather disappointing Marvel limited series Secret Wars, *and the absolutely horrible* Secret Wars II. *The Beyonder is a being of almost unlimited power, so when we ask, "If I had the power of the Beyonder, I'd...," we're basically asking, "What would you do if you had godlike powers?" in a rather comic-bookish way.*

That's a wrap. If I had the power of the Beyonder, I'd take a really long nap and forget the world for a while. Maybe I'll do that anyway. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin wishes he could find one karaoke bar—just one!—that has the song "Drop-kick Me, Jesus, Through the Goal Posts of Life."

Send letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizardTGTC@AOL.Com

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Dingo by Juvaun Kirby. Minotaur by Jeff Rebner and John Tighe. Comanche and Flint by Juvaun Kirby. Swift and Prism by Ryan Odagawa and Eric Shanower.

THE UNCANNY X-MEN
Wait for the Onslaught

Filming on "Jurassic Park 2" begins. "We've got a much smaller budget with this one, but the dinosaurs look as real as ever!" exclaimed Director Steven Spielberg.

Bizarre mating ritual observed in local neighborhood. "He just stared down his throat for a while and then jammed a large white rabbit up his ass," revealed a perplexed observer.

Too many crossovers finally gets the best of Wolverine. "I haven't had a moments rest since that X-Men/Micronauts mini-series. Gonna go sleepies now," sighed a weary mutant-like freak.

Marvel's big event for the summer of 1996—leading up to the implementation of the Lee/Liefeld era in September—is "Onslaught," a serious crossover about a very powerful character who has already made his presence felt in the X-titles, even though readers haven't actually seen him yet. Eventually, however, his actions will reverberate throughout the entire Marvel Universe, in a story event worked out by X-scribes Scott Lobdell and Mark Waid, and editor Bob Harras.

According to Marvel President Jerry Calabrese, "It entails the first reworking of Marvel's core characters in 30 years."

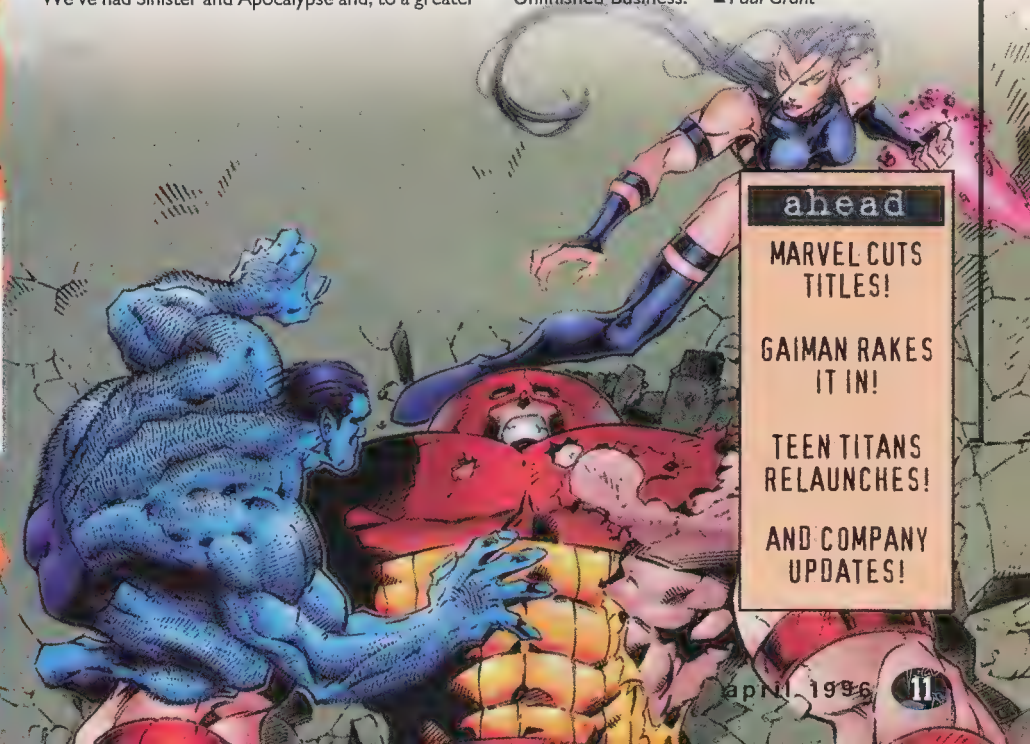
Onslaught's first mention was in *Uncanny X-Men* #322, where readers learned that he seriously injured Professor X's stepbrother Cain "Juggernaut" Marko, albeit off-screen. In *X-Men* #50, Wolverine, Iceman, Cyclops and Storm have a very tough fight against one of Onslaught's minions named Post. The mysterious aboriginal transporter Gateway tells them Post was only the lowliest of Onslaught's emissaries. As for Onslaught himself? Said Gateway, "There is no power on this Earth—or any other—capable of stopping it."

Onslaught was originally created by *Uncanny X-Men* writer Lobdell to give the X-Men a real challenge and fill a perceived void. "The X-Men never had their own Galactus-type character," he explained. "We've had Sinister and Apocalypse and, to a greater or lesser extent, Magneto, but these characters are plotters. What I was after was a character who could take the X-Men's butts and wrap them around their collective shoulders. That's why Onslaught's very first fight was against the Juggernaut, an irresistible force."

Onslaught's perceived motivation, at first, just seems to be rage, according to Waid. "He is almost an undirected elemental force," Waid observed. "But every time Onslaught manifests, his goals become clearer and he becomes wiser, smarter and more self-aware."

Who—or perhaps the better question is "what"—is Onslaught? That is currently a tightly guarded secret, but there have been clues dropped already for the truly perceptive to pick up on. "Keep a close eye on his targets," Waid advised.

The story of Onslaught gathers real momentum in May, in *Uncanny X-Men* #334 and *X-Men* #54. In June, Marvel releases the first bookend, called *Onslaught: X-Men*, in which your favorite mutants face Onslaught and discover his secret. "They'll realize this is the biggest thing they've faced," said Harras, "and realize they'll have to go for help. The story will progress until the first week in August through all the Marvel books, and then we'll have the other bookend, tentatively called *Onslaught: Marvel Universe*. That will be the wrap-up book. And that will lead into the Lee/Liefeld event in September known as 'Unfinished Business.' " ■ *Paul Grant*



ahead

MARVEL CUTS TITLES!

GAIMAN RAKES IT IN!

TEEN TITANS RELAUNCHES!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Editors, Titles Cut at Marvel

The New Year started off with unpleasant news for over 250 people at Marvel and Malibu as massive layoffs were implemented, including much of the editorial staff.

Senior editors Bob Budiansky (Spider-Man) and Carl Potts (licensed properties) were let go on Jan. 3, as were many other editorial employees, including 2099 editor Joey Cavalieri.

Ralph Macchio is currently handling the Spider-Man titles with Tom Brevoort, and the entire line is under scrutiny.

"We are trying to make sense of where it possibly went wrong and possibly went right," said Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras. "My goal is to go back to the basics as much as I can, which is about a guy named Peter Parker who swings around the city as Spider-Man."

Nancy Poletti is presently in charge of the licensed titles, although all of them are being canceled in the near future. Other titles being dropped include *Green Goblin* and *New Warriors*. All the current titles in the 2099 line are also being canceled. The line will be concentrated into one double-sized monthly book called *2099*, starting in June or July. Writers Tom Peyer and Peter David, and artists Ron Lim and Humberto Ramos all resigned their 2099 assignments in the wake of the firing of 2099 line editor Cavalieri.

Other titles are also being evaluated. Both Thor and Hulk are part of the Jim Lee/Rob Liefeld deal with Marvel, but *The Incredible Hulk* is not going to be canceled and no decision has yet been made as to whether *Thor* will continue past September. *Ghost Rider*, *Punisher*, *Silver Surfer*, *What If?* and *Daredevil* are not scheduled for cancellation either, and no changes in the number of X-Men related books are planned.

At Malibu, only *Prime*, *Rune* and *UltraForce* will continue, under editor Mark Paniccia. At least initially, they will not merge with the Marvel Universe, although that remains an option down the line.

Marvel does plan to launch some new series in 1996, according to Harras, including a new *Elektra* ongoing monthly beginning in the summer. Harras has also been meeting with Image co-founder Marc Silvestri, discussing some possible team-up books. ■ *PG*

JURGENS Leaves SPIDER-MAN, Picks Up TITANS

Dan Jurgens has left the writing and penciling chores on Marvel's *Sensational Spider-Man*, in a move he chalked up to an inability to "mesh" with the Marvel editorial team. He stressed that the resignation is not connected to recent editorial layoffs at Marvel. "My decision to leave predates all the editorial changes at Marvel," Jurgens pointed out. "Those happened in early January; I submitted my resignation before Christmas."

"It's important to understand that when Marvel brought me into this, we signed a letter of intent to do six issues," Jurgens explained. "Sometimes you get into a situation where a creator has a particular idea of what he wants to do and the editorial staff has another, and you don't realize the ideas don't mesh—or, more importantly, the working methods don't mesh," he added. "In this case, based on things that were happening with the character and the editorial relationship, I decided not to renew the agreement."

Jurgens is not, however, taking it easy. He's currently working on designing and plotting the adventures of a new team of Teen Titans for DC Comics.

This group, which Jurgens hopes to be able to call by the traditional name of "Teen Titans," will—with one exception—be an all-new team of young heroes.

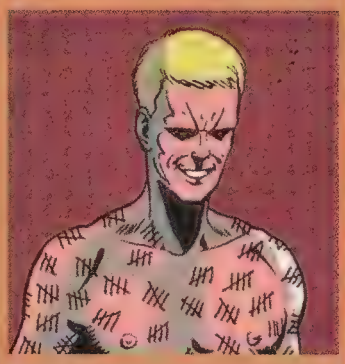
"One of the Titans will be an already established DC character—the Atom, who was de-aged to about 17 during *Zero Hour*," Jurgens said. Unfortunately, it's too soon to release details on any other characters at this time.

Unlike the original series of the 1960s, this Teen Titans will not be primarily involved with topical, kid-oriented problem-solving, although Jurgens is quick to point out: "The Mad Mod [an old Titans beatnik villain] will be in this series. It'll be the thing that binds this to the other versions of the Titans."

Jurgens will script and do breakdowns for the new book, currently set for a late summer or early fall debut. Finishing his pencils and inking the book will be an old hand at the Titans, George Pérez. "I couldn't be more thrilled to be working with George," he noted. "We did a Superman story together a few years back and have been looking for a chance to work together again ever since."

Pérez looks on this assignment as an opportunity to once again contribute to comics' success on a regular basis. "There's been a call to arms to have the big names get out there and do more monthly work, so I figured I could manage doing finishes over Dan's stuff on a monthly basis," he said. "I'm tickled to death about this." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

We Looked It Up



Zsasz (zazz) *DC Universe* 1 Batman villain who views humans as mere robots, and thus goes around murdering random people for the pure joy of it, after which he makes a small cut on his body for each kill made (currently has over 143 marks) 2 Presently imprisoned in high security steel box at Arkham Asylum 3 The 47th word from the end of *Webster's New World Dictionary*

Hernandez Bros. Bring LOVE & ROCKETS to a Landing

Love & Rockets, the linchpin title for Fantagraphics Books and one of the most highly acclaimed alternative comics of its era, will end its 14-year run with issue #50, scheduled to ship in March.

"It was time," said Jaime Hernandez, who will wrap up the current saga of Hopey and Maggie with the third and final installment of "Bob Robertson" in the landmark issue. "We need a break—not a big one, but a break in continuity to refresh ourselves."

Love & Rockets #50

Brother Gilbert, who bids farewell to the residents of Palomar with a story in which the little Central American hamlet is hit by an earthquake, agreed. "I've said what I have to say with this material and am looking forward to doing some things in different genres."

A third story in the 64-page finale will be a political thriller, "Fever Scars the Heart," by Mario Hernandez, whose work last appeared in issue #40. It was Mario, Jaime said, "who pretty much got us going in the beginning, who was the driving force to produce an actual comic book." A fourth brother, Ismael, bankrolled that first issue.

Love & Rockets began its run as a more fantasy-oriented title (Maggie was a "solar mechanic," Gilbert's Luba was featured in "BEM," a science-fiction story), but hit its stride when the creators began taking a more realistic approach. "The characters were always the most important aspect," said Jaime, "and a fantastic background seemed out of place for the stories I wanted to tell." In fact, recognizing that his storytelling approach was changing again helped convince Gilbert that it was time to move on. "As I realized that I was writing more pure adventure stories again," he admitted, "I knew it was time to end it. I'll come back to the Palomar characters, especially some I didn't really get a chance to develop, but in different kinds of stories, ones not so much linked to an ongoing continuity."

Gilbert is currently working on *Girl Crazy*, a three-issue mini-series for Dark Horse Comics, which he described as "a light adventure series about beautiful girls who like to dress up in crazy clothes." Jaime, still pushing to meet the deadline for issue #50 ("Wrapping this up is harder than I thought it would be."), said his next project will "probably follow the lives of a couple of the characters from this series and introduce new characters and surroundings for them. I'd tell you who, but I really don't know at this point."

Fantagraphics has said that new Los Bros. projects will be announced this summer and promised to keep the *Love & Rockets* trade paperback collections in print. ■ *Jack Curtin*

Gaiman Signs $1 Mil Book Deal

In what is almost certainly the largest mainstream publishing breakthrough ever for a comics creator, Neil Gaiman recently signed what *Publishers Weekly* called a "million dollar deal" with Avon Books.

Neil Gaiman

The three-book contract centers around "Neverwhere," the six-part BBC series that Gaiman created which is currently being filmed in England. The series will air in Britain next fall and the first book on the Avon contract, *Neverwhere*, is scheduled for publication in March 1997.

The second book is a short story collection, still untitled, to be published in 1998. The following year will see the release of *Time in the Smoke*, a second novel set in the Neverwhere milieu.

While some press reports suggest that this marks a major career change for Gaiman, the fact is that he is already the co-author of one best-selling novel (*Good Omens*, with Terry Pratchett), as well as several other books. He has also clearly stated that he will continue to write comics in addition to his other projects (*Death: The Time of Your Life*, a four-part mini-series from Vertigo, is currently on sale). ■ *JC*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• So who's Jim Lee getting to write *Fantastic Four* as part of his deal with Marvel? Buzz hears it'll be Dan Jurgens, though neither Jurgens nor Lee will confirm.

• In a related vein, Buzz gets word that Mark Waid is being wooed to become the mastermind behind *Sensational Spider-Man*, in the wake of Jurgens' departure. Again, no confirmation has been given yet.

• Inside sources tell Buzz that publishers are lining up—including DC Comics—to get a shot at Howard Chaykin's new version of his *American Flagg!* title, last published by First Comics in the 1980s.

• Tom Grummett has graduated to the regular penciler role for *Action Comics*, effective issue #724 shipping in June. Buzz has yet to pick up who will replace Grummett as artist on *Superboy* and *Superman: Man of Tomorrow*.

• Buzz hears that writer/artist John Byrne will soon take the reins of DC's *New Gods* series with issue #12 in September. Byrne still plans to continue writing *Wonder Woman*.

• The Justice League is due for a facelift in October with a #1 issue. Sources tell Buzz the team will once again consist of the Big Guns of the DC Universe just like it did once before. Grant Morrison will handle the writing chores while Howard Porter is set to draw it. The series will be preceded by a mini-series written by Fabian Nicieza and Mark Waid.

• Buzz has learned that a creator-owned science fiction imprint is in the works at DC. Going by the name of Matrix, the imprint will launch in July with two ongoing titles, followed by a mini-series and a third ongoing series premiering in August. Details are sketchy at present, because things such as titles for the projects are undergoing copyright and trademark searches.

NEWS BITES

Comics, Fantasy Artists Display on the Web

The Internet has long been predicted as a pathway to varied and unusual experiences, and the opening of the new Spiderwebart Gallery at http://www.spiderwebart.com is proof. Artists of differing styles have their work on display, including Boris Vallejo, Joe Quesada, Julie Bell and others. In addition to the images themselves, biographies of the artists are provided. Subject matter includes science fiction, fantasy, comic, animation and book illustrations, and if one really catches your eye, original works and signed collectibles are available for purchase.

A visit to the sight reveals figures framed by spider webs, but not necessarily images with either spider or web content. As one would expect, the site is very graphic-intensive with large pages bigger than one monitor screen, making high-speed modems necessary to reduce long wait-periods. To further advertise the site among the online community, the organizers are offering a $50 gift certificate per month to those who register. ■ *Henry Colonna*

Marvels Wins ALA Honor

Marvels, the exploration of the history of Marvel's fictional world by Kurt Busiek and Alex Ross, was named a Best Book for Young Adults by the American Library Association at its Midwinter Conference in San Antonio in January. ■ *PDO*

Gene Colan Benefit Auction Set for March

Comic book artist Gene Colan, renowned for work on everything from *Daredevil* to *Tomb of Dracula*, is suffering from a serious form of glaucoma. Responding to the escalating medical costs, a benefit auction is planned.

The auction will take place at the Comic Book Extravaganza on Sunday, March 10th, at the Marriott-East Hotel, 525 Lexington Avenue in New York City. Contributions of rare original art, signed books and other materials are being provided by the likes of Todd McFarlane, Stan Lee, John Buscema, Dave Cockrum, Harlan Ellison, Mike Ploog, John Romita Sr., Jim Steranko, Walt Simonson, Joe Sinnott and many others. Proceeds from this benefit will go directly to the Colan family.

For further information, call (201) 605-8345. ■ *PDO*

TMNT Move to Image

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles are on the move in more ways than one. After shutting down Mirage Studios' comics business, Kevin Eastman and Simon Bisley are teaming together to do a Turtle mini-series for Image Comics entitled *Body Count*, from Erik Larsen's studio, Highbrow Entertainment.

What exactly will Erik Larsen's role in the comic be? "I don't have that much input in the mini-series, but when the ongoing monthly starts after the mini, I have many ideas about how to bring in some new

continued on page 18

NORM BREYFOGLE RETURNS TO PRIME

Artist Norm Breyfogle returns to the pages of Malibu Comics' *Prime* beginning with *Prime/Captain America* in March. Following the one-issue Malibu/Marvel crossover, Breyfogle has signed on to pencil *Prime* #9-#15.

Breyfogle, who illustrated the first 13 issues of the original *Prime* series, said he is looking forward to his return to the book. "Some fans may remember that, in the letter column of #13 [first series], I said I'd be back. I knew that the Primates would eventually come after me if I didn't!"

Breyfogle left *Prime* to concentrate on *Metaphysique*, his creator-owned Bravura project, and then for a four-issue stint on Acclaim's *Bloodshot*.

"I would like to draw *Prime* indefinitely," he said, "but I've had to do what's right for my career. Right now, that's *Prime*." Breyfogle will be working with perennial *Prime* writers Gerard Jones and Len Strazewski, as the series takes several dramatic turns including the "Great Race" story in #10, in which Prime, Turbocharge and Zip Zap of *Strangers* fame race one another to determine the Ultraverse's fastest superhero.

As a winner of the 1995 Parents' Choice Award, *Prime* is in distinguished company. "One of the reasons I'm proud to be associated with *Prime* is industry recognition," said Breyfogle. ■ *Christopher Griffen*

UNDERSTANDING THE FINE PRINT

Here's all the trademark and copyright information for Scott McCloud's "Understanding Manga" feature.

Page 44: All faces on Globe © and ™ their respective creators, including Makato Kobayashi, Takeshi Yoneda, M. Yokoyama, Kazuya Kudo & Ryoichi Ikegami, Shotaro Ishinomori, Rumiko Takahashi, Shuhei Nishizawa, H. Sato, Riyoko Ikeda, Osamu Tezuka, Masamune Shirow, Shigeru Mizuki, Norio Hayasi & Yasuiti Osima, Monkey Punch, Gozeki Kojima & Kazuo Koike, Reiji Matsumoto, Keiji Nakazawa, Mitsuru Adachi, Keiko Takemiya, Sampei Shirato, Katsuhiro Otomo, Akira Toriyama, Yoshimi Ochida, Fujio-Fujiko and Shinji Mizushima. LONE WOLF AND CUB © & ™ Gozeki Kojima & Kazuo Koike.

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Page 46: YOUNGBLOOD © and ™ Rob Liefeld. Panel 2 © and ™ as on page 44. FATHER AND SON © and ™ as on page 45. Panel 6 art © and ™ Shigeru Mizuki, H. Sato, 750 RIDER's creator & Osamu Tezuka.

Page 47: Panel 1 art © and ™ Riyoko Ikeda, Oasamu Tezuka and Kazuo Umezu. Panel 2 art © and ™ Riyoko Ikeda.

Page 48: Panel 1 art © and ™ Riyoko Ikeda, Katsuhiro Otomo, Gozeki Kojima & Kazuo Koike, Rumiko Takahashi, Masamune Shirow, Kazuya Kudo & Ryoichi Ikegami and Keiji Nakazawa. AKIRA © and ™ Katsuhiro Otomo.

THIS YEAR, THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE WILL ALL MEET AT THE CROSSROADS OF HELL.

CLIVE BARKER
PRESENTS

HELLRAISER

BLOODLINE

COMING SOON

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DIMENSION FILMS

2001's Clarke, Others Join the BIG Team

"We now have what we believe to be our own fantasy dream team," declared Mitchell Rubinstein, chairman and chief executive officer of BIG Entertainment.

And while they may sleep when they dream, the folks at BIG Entertainment were wide awake when they added famed sci-fi author Arthur C. Clarke (*2001: A Space Odyssey*), role-playing game author Margaret Weis, and best-selling novelist Tad Williams (*Caliban's Hour*, *Tailchaser's Song*) to their already impressive talent roster. Other BIG house residents include Isaac Asimov, Tom Clancy, Neil Gaiman, John Jakes, Anne McCaffrey, Leonard Nimoy, Gene Roddenberry, Robert Silverberg and Mickey Spillane.

The Clarke project is in the earliest of embryonic stages, without even an editor assigned and a working title. But seeing as how no Hal 9000 computer has ever made a mistake or distorted data, this has not dampened Rubinstein's excitement.

"Arthur C. Clarke is a legend in the science-fiction field," said Rubinstein. "Clarke is the mastermind behind combining science and technology into thrilling sci-fi stories."

Weis' project, tentatively entitled *Wyrm*, features a "dragon-possessed, immortal human, who seeks to track and destroy the evil dragon who controls him."

"Margaret Weis' property for BIG Entertainment," said *Wyrm* editor Christopher Mills, "is a uniquely contemporary twist on traditional fantasy elements, with a hero and villain that, while mythic in scope, are very '90s in execution. Weis refuses to shamelessly exploit the conventions of the genre—instead, she builds upon them, adding layers of depth, meaning and rich characterization."

Williams' project is less developed, but *Mirror World* editor Martin Powell is no less devoted. "Although we're still in the early stages of *Mirror World*," said Powell, "Tad Williams' energy and enthusiasm are very contagious. I know that Tad's multitude of loyal readers will be very, very pleased with the imaginative surprises he has in store for them in *Mirror World*, his first graphic novel."

BIG Entertainment will release all projects as illustrated graphic novels, and plans to license the properties into a variety of entertainment media formats and products. ■ *Ruth Morrison*

company updates

AC COMICS

Fighting Females strike back in Golden Age Greats Vol. 8, coming in April. Heroines from the 1940s—Miss Victory, Phantom Lady and Miss Mystique—team up to battle with Adolf Hitler.

ARCHIE COMICS

Get nostalgic with Betty and Veronica in the pale reminiscence [illegible] issue in March by reminiscing with Jack Riverside pick.

ARIA PRESS

March's *Voices of A Darker Soul* is a pin-up book featuring the work of Bob Simmons, Buzz, Jose Luis, Dennis Lopez, Billy Tucci, David Lapham and others. Look for the Colleen Doran-covered book at $2.95.

BONEYARD PRESS

Happy Birthday to Boneyard Press, which turns five years old this year! To celebrate, Boneyard will release its first color book, *Five Years of Pain* featuring pin-ups of all your favorite Boneyard characters by Jimmy Palmiotti, Billy Tucci, Steven Hughes, Jill Thompson, Steve Rissette and more. You can also look forward to a fully painted poster by Dmitry Petrov, featuring plenty of familiar faces. Both items ship in May. . . . The 32-page *Girl with a Gun* telling the tale of Little Miss Priss, who inadvertently the last Roman Catholic Pope, features a Guy Davis (*Sandman Mystery Theatre*) cover. This book, suggested for mature readers, ships in March.

BONGO COMICS

Bongo!, an offbeat so-it-rule, springs from a flip book preview story in Simpsons Comics #19-#22 to its own title (the first non-Simpsons series from Bongo) in September.

BROADWAY COMICS

It's the beginning of "It's the End of the World as We Know It," a new storyline running through *Powers that Be* starting with issue #5. . . . There's a great new feature on Broadway's World Wide Web site. You can now locate the nearest comic book store that carries Broadway product. Check it out at http://www.net/~www/broadway/.

CALIBER PRESS

In April, *Kabuki* is hosted by the Nob in the three issue mini-series *Kabuki: Masks of the Noh*. Guest artists include Buzz, Rick Mays, Joe Quesada and Andrew Robinson. The stories will feed into a new ongoing *Kabuki* series to debut this summer. . . . Also in April, the critically acclaimed series *Mr.*

[illegible] issues to a bi-monthly schedule. . . . Mike Zeck's [illegible] Problem on [illegible] issue this series in April, with [illegible] covers. . . . Part of the proceeds from the sale of Mike Zeck's [illegible] Family Values #1 (which shipped in February) is going to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, to help pay for the legal battles between the owners of Phoenix Comics—who were charged with selling "obscene" comics—and the state of Oklahoma. You can buy a signed edition of the issue by sending $3.00 to: Phoenix, CBLDF Benefit, P.O. Box 57, Harrisburg, PA 15724. Fifty cents per copy sold goes to the Fund.

CHAOS! COMICS

Ghost Dancers #3 in April reveals the horrific consequences of Lady Death's arrival on Earth, under a cover painted by Joe Jusko. . . . Hungarian fans will go wild over a [illegible] cover featuring Lady Death's face to be painted by Zdzisław Beksiński. Check a preview of Beksiński's work in April's *Purgatori Preview* #1, a $1.50 TB super that delves into the vampire's origin.

DANCING ELEPHANT PRESS

Greetings from New Eden, which collects the first four issues of Fred Gray's *Kane*, ships in March. . . . Also around is *Burglar Bill* mini-comic special by Fred Hembeck in 1994, covering the *Kane* book up discussion.

DARK HORSE COMICS

All you needed to know about the supplement B is revealed in *X-Files* #2, shipping in April. Also in [illegible] . . . *Ghost Anchorman* requires *Ghost* #1 and #2, look for it in May. . . . Gene Colorado and John Bolton's *Blood Dragon* mini-series from Epic Comics in the 1980s will be released into a trade paperback in April. . . . The three issue *Doug Wendt* mini-series begins in April, continuing the saga of the cowboy rabbit.

DC COMICS

Peter David and Gary Frank will return to produce a Superman-supporting series sometime in 1996. . . . The current Green Lantern and Green Arrow have the wrap-up treatment going in "Road Trembling Through: The Road Conclusion." The story starts in May and goes through Green Lantern #76-#77 and Green Arrow #[illegible]. . . . Keith Giffen is taking over the writing reins of DC's Aztec title in August.

ENTITY COMICS

April's *Aria 2*, a pin-up book [illegible], featuring a flip cover by [illegible]

continued on page 17

YOU CAN'T KEEP AWAY FROM AN OLD FLAME

Venerable wizards Vecna, Tenser, and more of your favorite classic DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game champions, monsters, and realms make their first appearances in decades in the SPELLFIRE® *Runes & Ruins Booster Pack, Set 8*. You'll love the realms of White Plume Mountain, the Keep on the Borderlands, the Tomb of Horrors, and more! You'll go ape over Oonga and creatures from the FIEND FOLIO® accessory. You'll flip head over heels for the new unarmed combat cards for use by heroes. And it all comes into play in March!

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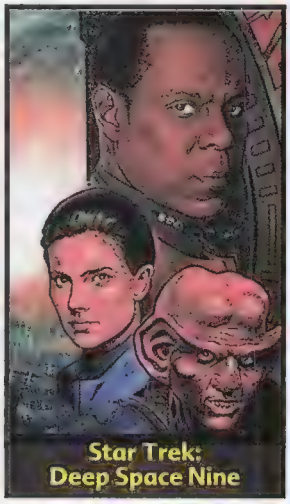
Marvel Acquires Star Trek License

Paramount Television has awarded Marvel Comics the license to publish comic books about the Star Trek Universe, *Wizard* has learned.

While neither company will officially confirm the deal, inside sources indicate that Marvel will reportedly publish five ongoing Star Trek series, beginning in August. They will be *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, *Star Trek: Voyager*, *Star Trek: Unlimited* (a quarterly, apparently featuring stories with the crew of the original series and of "The Next Generation"), *Star Fleet Academy* (based on the series of young adult novels published by Pocket Books), and *Enterprise: The Early Voyages* (featuring the pre-James Kirk adventures of the original starship).


Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

It's also reported that the kick-off to the new run will be *Star Trek: X-Men*, a one-shot combining Marvel's top-selling mutants with the world of the Federation. (We're not kidding!) Rumored to be writing the title is former X-Men scribe Chris Claremont. ■ *PDO*

NEWS BITES

continued from page 14

readers without alienating the old readers," Larsen said. "Specifically, I have some ideas, none of which or all of which may happen. I want to kill off a long-running character; I want to modify the characters' physical characteristics somehow—possibly through disfigurement such as a scar; I want to bring the characters out of their teens and age them up somehow."

Some publishers handle these events by starting over from scratch and resetting issue numbers, but Larsen said that's not the case. "No, I will *not* be pulling a *Man of Steel*," Larsen assured, referring to DC's revamp of Superman in 1986. "I don't want to alienate those fans who have been around for years. But I don't want to dwell on the past either." ■ *HC*

Six Flags Has a Job for Superman

In January, Six Flags theme parks announced a major new attraction at its Valencia, California location. Since the Batman roller coaster has been a tremendous success, Six Flags has decided to build a Superman-themed ride. However, Six Flags is not merely content to repeat the same formula with another roller coaster. "Superman the Escape," as it is tentatively called, will blast aerodynamic vehicles out of a small station, where they will reach 100 mph within seven seconds. The cars will then shoot straight up a 41-story tower, pause, and then fall back for about a minute. The design of "Superman the Escape" allows a weightless sensation for a longer duration and for a higher velocity (100 mph) than most roller coasters achieve. To handle the anticipated volume, the attraction will be built to handle 1,800 riders per hour. ■ *HC*

company updates

continued from page 16

Greed 1 from Teenage, has Nina meet a highly unlikely ally in her mission to guard the time continuum. . . . Beginning in April is the home-run monthly *Bill Mills comic*, *The Skunk*, starring the smallest superhero around.

FIREMAN PRESS

March sees the release of the first Sand spin-off *Lo Cosa Nostroid* #3, stars a bunch of mobsters, giant warrior robots, Mr. Spider-god, and the usual zaniness that you'd expect from Fireman Press!

HARRIS COMICS

In April's *Vampirella Strikes* #4, which Vamp try to free her friend's soul from an ancient evil that feeds on young women! (Jerry Seinfeld?)

HIGH IMPACT STUDIOS

March features the double whammy of *Jazz: Solo* #3 (starring the character's first solo series) and the *High Impact Studios Anniversary Special* (a behind the scenes book celebrating the company's first year and featuring the Elena and Jazz models).

IMAGE COMICS

• CARTOON BOOKS

April sees a full-color poster of Four Bone's first encounter with the red dragon. This 24" x 36" poster, re-presenting the cover from the Image Comics edition of *Bone* #1, retails for $5.95 . . . A Bone playing card set is on the schedule for June. The set contains a normal deck of cards, with Bone on the backs and various Bone characters on the face cards. . . . November should hopefully see the release of the Dragon Statue put out by Graphitti Designs, and sculpted by Randy Bowen. Cartoon Books hopes to do an entire series of statues covering all of the regular Bone characters.

• HIGHBROW ENTERTAINMENT

Savage Dragon #21 is a shocker! Kapture proposes marriage to the Dragon but what's his response? See how the fans voted in this March issue.

• SAM KIETH'S STUDIO

Mage: Friends of Mage Special focuses on supporting cast members, namely Dude Japan and his girlfriend. The 48-page issue ships in April.

• TODD MCFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

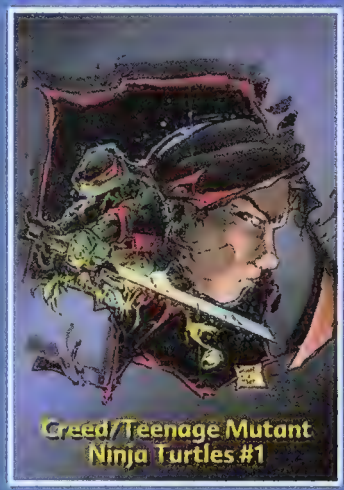
Hot dog! The double-sized *Spawn* #50 comes out in May.

• TOP COW PRODUCTIONS

Medieval Spawn/Witchblade #3 probes the link between the two characters. Written by *Preacher*'s Garth Ennis, this serves as a prelude to Marc Silvestri's next project, *The Darkness*.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

There's a huge Image-wide crossover happening this August starring all your favorite Image characters. This four-issue weekly mini-series will be written by Alan Moore and penciled by Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, and possibly Todd McFarlane and George Perez. . . . Be sure to check out the "Fire from Heaven" crossover hitting stores this April, which explores the origin of the whole Gen Universe! Look for *Fire from Heaven* #3, *Stormwatch* #1, *The Sword of Damocles* #3 and *Deathblow* #26 to kick off this year's big crossover. . . . WildStorm will be launching a new $1.75 line of comics, starting with *Bazooka*, which tells the tale of America's greatest bounty hunter. This comic line, beginning in May, will still be tied to the rest of the WildStorm continuity. . . . Jim Lee will return as penciler to *WildC.A.T.s* with issue #31, as Alan Moore will continue as the series' regular writer.


Greed/Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #1

LIGHTNING COMICS

Greed has two major team-ups this spring. After he guest-stars in March's

continued on page 20

TOP COW™

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THE WEEK OF...

CYBER FORCE® TIN MEN OF WAR THE COLLECTED EDITION
APRIL 29th-MAY 3rd

WEAPON ZERO™ #4
MAY 6th-10th

WITCHBLADE™ #6
MAY 6th-10th

RIPCLAW™ #6
MAY 13th-17th

CYBER FORCE® #23 #24
(That's right, twice in May!!)
#23 MAY 13th-17th
#24 MAY 27th-31th

MEDICAL SPAWN WITCHBLADE® #2
MAY 20th-24th

GUARANTEED.

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IN MEMORIAM

Two comic book creators recently passed away, one a founding father and the other a budding star.

Jerry Siegel, co-creator of Superman with the late Joe Shuster, passed away on Monday, January 29. He died of heart failure at the age of 81. (For more on the passing of this comic book great, see next issue.)

Nick Manabat, artist of Jim Lee's Cybernary stories in *Deathblow*, passed away on Sunday, November 5, ending his battle with lymphoma. He was 23.

BYTE THIS!

Lady Death/Evil Ernie creators Brian Pulido and Steven Hughes preview the new *Lady Death: Odyssey* mini-series on March 29 @ 8:00-8:45 p.m. (EST). Wizard World also has exclusive cover and interior art previews in the download library. There will also be prizes of signed comics, premium editions and other goodies.

Dan Jurgens will be on Wizard World April 18 @ 9:00-9:45 p.m. (EST). Meet the man who killed Superman and made Spider-Man blonde.

Wanna be in comics? Acclaim writer/artist Mark Moretti hosts Wizard World's "Breaking In" chatroom every other Thursday 8:00-9:00 p.m. (EST). Mark's professional guests to be announced.

To hook up to Wizard World on America Online, call 800-754-4400. They'll send you free software and 10 hours free online. Keyword: Wizard. ■ *Buddy Scalera*

Question of the Month

Since the announcement that Marvel and DC were merging their characters into one, it's become all the rage on fans' minds. *Wizard* decided to post five Marvel/DC character amalgamations on our America Online forum, "Wizard World," asking fans which of the five they'd want to see most. Here are the results:

Iron Man + Darkseid = Ironseid 21%
Batman + Daredevil = Devil-Bat 21%
Wolverine + Green Lantern = Wolvering 19%
Silver Surfer + Firestorm = Silver Storm 14%
War Machine + Peacemaker = Warmaker 14%
Spider-Man + Hawkman = Spider-Hawk 11%

We also asked the fans to come up with some amalgamations of their own. The following are the five best amalgamations. Hope you get as much of a hoot out of them as we did. (To see *Wizard*'s "Top 10 Marvel/DC Character Amalgams" go to page 179.)

- Bat-Mite + Morpheus + Power Man + Phantom Stranger = The Mite-y Morpheus Power Stranger
- Silver Surfer + Hardware = Silverware.
- Green Lantern + Giant-Man = Green Giant
- Howard the Duck + Darkseid = Duckseid
- Daredevil + The Ray = Ray Charles
- The Hulk + Lobo = Hobo.

OOPS!

All right, all right. So we goofed. Give us a break, okay? Anyways, we whole heartedly apologize for any trauma, ridiculing, death, maiming or all-out unpleasantness caused by the following errors:

• Rob Kinmonth photographed the "Big Bang" feature on *Magic: The Gathering* and Paul Schiraldi photographed "The Art of the Deal" feature on Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld's return to Marvel Comics in *Wizard* #55.

• Tim Pope is the director for "The Crow" sequel "The Crow: City of Angels," and not Alex Proyas as reported in *Wizard* #55. W

company updates

continued from page 15

Catfight: Dream into Action #1, he joins the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in April for a full-color one-shot. Writer/artist Trem Kamiuga has Mark, Leonardo and Raphael end up in Freed's dream world, and they must fight their way back to reality.

MARVEL COMICS

Mike Wieringo (*Robin*) is set to draw Mark Waid's story for *Avengers* #400 out in May.

MAXIMUM PRESS

When Avengelyne's ongoing series begins in April, so does the countdown to her baby! In the first story arc, she'll be battling a group of angels who don't want her mysteriously conceived child to be born. Look for the photo variant cover of Cathy Christian as the heroine on the first issue.

MEET DANNY OCEAN

Expect a *Very Vicky Junior Hepcat Funbook* in April. This trade paperback collects scattered *Very Vicky* stories and strips, as well as new material and pin-ups by the likes of Dave Sim, Evan Dorkin and others.

MIRAGE PUBLISHING

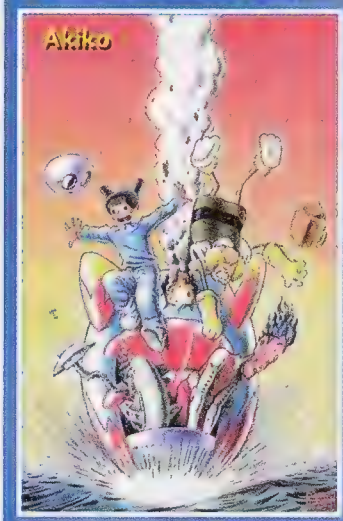
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (vol. 2) #13 was the last issue to be published under the Mirage banner. The turtles will continue their adventures under a monthly TMNT comic put out by Erik Larsen on Image Comics. (Plus the Archie books!)

ONE-SHOT PRESS

Strictly Independent #3, which spotlights independent comic books, ships in July. Look for the cover with the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT

You can enjoy all-new adventures starring Akiko and her friends on the Planet Smoo when *Akiko* #1 launches the new monthly series in March.



TEKNO-COMIX

Starting in April, all Tekno titles will be published under Bit-Entertainment. *Phage: Shadow Warrior* #1 is a six-issue mini-series written by Bryan Talbot. The title, shipping in April, tells the tale of a dark hero on a quest to assassinate the Teknophage.

TOPPS COMICS

The Lone Ranger and Tonto: Velvet Dragon #1 ships in April. This five-issue series has the duo fighting the threat of the Velvet Dragon. Written by Joe R. Lansdale, with art by Ted Naifeh. *Elric: One Life* #0 has writer/artist P. Craig Russell adapt Neil Gaiman's short story. This book also has a six-page prelude to Topps' upcoming *Elric: Stormbringer* series. A *Lady Rawhide* trade paperback is due in April, collecting the five-issue mini-series.

WARP GRAPHICS

"Contrary to rumors on the Net, *Elfquest* is not dead or dying," said WaRP Marketing Director Steve Thomas. "It's moving and transforming after the 18-year storyline." WaRP promises that new beginnings are in store for the *Elfquest* line. ■

I know all about your hidden guns. I know your knives before they're ever pulled. I know your arsenic lies before they squirm free from your sweaty lips. I know all this and I'm not afraid. You may have escaped the law, but you won't escape me. The Man without Fear is back.
DAREDEVIL
DON'T TURN A BLIND EYE TO DAREDEVIL'S NEW MONTHLY CREATIVE TEAM OF KARL KESEL AND CARY NORD!
MARVEL®
PUTTING THE CHARACTER BACK IN COMICS
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come together

MARVEL & DC DO THE UNTHINKABLE BY COMBINING THEIR UNIVERSES INTO ONE

BY CRAIG SHUTT

"THIS IS OUR SECRET WEAPON IN THIS PROJECT," says DC Comics Executive Editor Mike Carlin. "This is where the 'new' fun happens."

Just when readers thought DC and Marvel Comics had put all their cards on the table with their four-issue *Marvel vs. DC* crossover, they learned that Superman fighting the Hulk was only the beginning. At the end of issue #3, both companies' superhero universes meld together to create the Amalgam Comics universe, a new line of comics featuring new heroes with characteristics from each.

"The crossover has never been done, but everyone has seen crowds of heroes crash into each other," Carlin says. "Smooshing them together hasn't *ever* been done. John Q. Public will enjoy the crossover, but this one is for the fans."

Carlin and Marvel Executive Editor Mark Gruenwald presented the package to the key editors at their respective companies, who generated a host of character and title ideas, says Gruenwald. "Then it was up to me and Mike as dictators—I mean, editors—to decide who could use who."

Naturally, there were some obvious combinations, confirms Ron Marz, writer of the Amalgam title *Dr. Strangefate*. "Everyone wanted to combine Batman and Wolverine," he says. "We had to pick the best spots to use these characters. But if everyone does what we planned, we think we'll have a coherent and believable universe."

Were there any combinations that were too wacky to use? "Quite honestly," says writer Karl Kesel, "'too wacky' wasn't a limitation; the limitation was space." That's overcome to some extent by the trading-card sets from SkyBox and Fleer. Written by Barbara Kesel, who co-wrote *X-Patrol*, they feature a host of amalgamations that just didn't fit into the comics. These include details on such groups as the Challengers of the Fantastic, led by Prof. Reed Richards, who heads up the Cadmus Project.

"When fans see these books, they're going to realize this is pure, unadulterated fun," Kesel says. Writer/artist John Byrne seconds that. "There was great potential for this to be really stupid," he says. "But I had a real good time doing it. I'm going to miss these characters."

These aren't origin stories either, the creators stress, even though they are #1 issues. These characters have existed for a long time before the adventures being told. Here's what readers will find when they are dropped smack-dab into the Amalgam Universe during the week of February 28:

SUPER-SOLDIER #1

Key smooshed characters: SUPERMAN, CAPTAIN AMERICA
Writer: MARK WAID
Artist: DAVE GIBBONS
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: DC

Super-Soldier sums up the Amalgam Universe perfectly. In the 1930s, young, frail Clark Kent of Kansas is injected with a Captain America-like Super-Soldier serum. Except, this concoction includes some weird alien DNA found on a crashed rocket ship. It not only bulks Clark up but gives him powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men. The story begins in 1941, but it soon catches up to the present, as Super-Soldier is brought out of suspended animation and enters the 1990s.

"He's Cap with heat vision," sums up writer Mark Waid. "But it's his fighting spirit that is his most powerful characteristic." That's a critical point, because his powers have been slipping for some time and he doesn't know why.

"This was the most fun of them all for me," says Waid, who wrote or co-wrote three of the Amalgam titles. "And, purely because of Dave Gibbons, we're the one to beat."

SPIDER-BOY #1

Key smooshed characters: SPIDER-MAN, SUPERBOY
Writer: KARL KESEL
Artists: MIKE WIERINGO & KARL KESEL
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: MARVEL

"Spider-Boy happens at 1,000 miles per hour on every single page," says writer/inker Karl Kesel. "It's kind of like what would happen if Jack Kirby had done Spider-Man. This is a big comic with big stuff happening on every page."

The book offers a lot of surprises and a lot of cameos, he notes. "We'd like to think that on every page, if not in every panel, fans will say, 'Whoa, look what they did!' That's what we're aiming for."

Spider-Boy has his hands full, taking on Bizzarnage (Bizzaro and Carnage),

then rushing off to fight King Lizard (King Shark and the Lizard). "He doesn't catch his breath for 22 pages," Kesel says. And that doesn't even address his relationship with Insect Queen! "When I finished this one, I said, 'Damn! I wish I had this much fun every month!' "

LEGEND OF THE DARK CLAW #1

Key smooshed characters: WOLVERINE, BATMAN
Writer: LARRY HAMA
Artists: JIM BALENT & RAY MCCARTHY
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: DC

Combine adamantium claws with a bat-like appearance and out comes Dark Claw, the nocturnal protector of Gotham City. "There are enough from both heroes that they should be recognizable," says writer Larry Hama. Dark Claw is aided by Sparrow, who should be a fashion nightmare, considering the character combines Jubilee and Robin. Together, they fight an ongoing battle with the Hyena, who blends the best traits of the Joker and Sabretooth, whatever those might be.

"The story is basically a caper," Hama says. The Hyena taunts Dark Claw with clues as to where he's about to strike next, leaving it up to the Claw to outsmart him. In the meantime, Dark Claw's unwanted ally, Carol Danvers the Huntress, uncovers his secret identity and creates more trouble.

Patriotic to the bone, Super-Soldier fights for Americans everywhere.

Dark Claw combines the best of Batman & Wolverine. It just doesn't get any grittier than that!

BRUCE WAYNE: AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. #1

Key smooshed characters: BATMAN, NICK FURY
Writer: CHUCK DIXON
Artist: CARY NORD
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: MARVEL

"I got to write the most exciting S.H.I.E.L.D. story I could think up," chortles writer Chuck Dixon. "I got to blow up a lot of stuff and do a great Steranko riff. I pretty much went nuts with this."

Bruce Wayne's parents die in an espionage plot, so he uses his inheritance to buy his way to the S.H.I.E.L.D. directorship. "He works from the shadows, with lots of money," Dixon says. A huge surprise lurks in the issue too, he hints. "It extrapolates on something that actually happened in the DC Universe, but that's all I want to say."

Dixon throws in his fair share of amalgamated characters, including The Green Skull, Selina Luthor ("the name says it all"), and revamped versions of Dick Grayson and Tony Stark. Sergeant Fury also shows up "with a famous DC sergeant," he says cagily, as do Baron Strucker and Mr. Freeze who are smooshed into Baron Zero.

SPEED DEMON #1

Key smooshed characters: GHOST RIDER, FLASH, DEMON
Writer: HOWARD MACKIE
Artists: JAMES FELDER, SALVADOR LARROCA & AL MILGROM
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: MARVEL

"This one's going to be a great ride," promises editor Bobbie Chase. "It'll look like a Who's Who of the demonic Amalgam Universe." The story focuses on Blaze Allen, an amalgam of Ghost Rider and the Silver Age Flash, who transforms into Speed Demon. This issue presents the culmination of a long race against the Night Spectre (Nightmare and The Spectre) to collect as many souls as they can.

Along the way, Speed Demon runs across Wally West (Kid Demon), as well as a host of other characters. They include Uatu the Watcher, the Golden Age Flash, Daimon Hellstrom, Hal Jordan, Speedy, Merlin, Iris Allen and the Green

Goblin—who's an amalgam of Harry Osborn and Two-Face. "Fans of Rick Jones' collection in *Hulk: Future Imperfect* are going to love this book," Chase says. "They'll get to see all the souls that have been collected by the racers."

X-PATROL #1

Key smooshed characters: DOOM PATROL, X-GUYS 'N' GALS
Writers: KARL KESEL & BARBARA KESEL
Artists: ROGER CRUZ & JON HOLDREDGE
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: MARVEL

By the time the editors came to this title, a lot of the really cool characters had already been taken, admits writer Karl Kesel. "Barbara and I decided to use that to our advantage." The result is the X-Patrol, a team of unwanted heroes—literally. "We've got some wacky characters, but it's a really interesting team."

It includes Niles Cable, the red-bearded cyborg who leads them; Ferro Man, who bears a strong resemblance to Colossus and dead Legionnaire Ferro Lad; and Dial H.U.S.K., the name Paige Guthrie

Yowza! Now that's one powerful babe! It's Wonder Woman/Storm in *Amazon* #1.

takes after finding a weird dial that allows her to split open and become a new hero each time. "We had a great time with that," he laughs.

Kesel knew this book would be a winner as soon as he found out his favorite Marvel villain was still available. So in their only known adventure, the X-Patrol must battle the evil of Dr. Doomsday!

AMAZON #1

Key smooshed characters: WONDER WOMAN, STORM
Writer: JOHN BYRNE
Artists: JOHN BYRNE & TERRY AUSTIN
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: DC

Who else but John Byrne could create Ororo Monroe, warrior champion of the Amazons of Themyscira? "They told me, 'Storm as Wonder Woman—go for it,' " says the writer/artist. "The rest was left to me." Ororo, however, didn't become the best by beating Diana, he stresses. Diana is long gone—and, in fact, appears here in a cameo and stars in *Bullets & Bracelets*.

"I took the concept back to the Ororo I knew," Byrne explains. "She's more aloof and godly, the Ororo we saw in *Giant-Size X-Men* #1." This origin features her family sailing for Africa, but the ship sinks and she winds up on Paradise Island. In this tale, she learns that Neptune sank her ship, and that revelation leads her to battle the very gods she's been raised to worship.

Byrne's art will be embellished by his former *Uncanny X-Men* inker, Terry Austin. "I've seen the cover, and it looks great," Byrne reports. "I wasn't sure about this when I sat down to do it, but it turned out to be fun."

BULLETS & BRACELETS #1

Key smooshed characters: WONDER WOMAN, THE PUNISHER
Writer: JOHN OSTRANDER
Artists: GARY FRANK & CAM SMITH
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: MARVEL

"The very incongruity of this team-up is what led me to it," says writer John Ostrander. "My story explains what binds them together and puts them on a quest that affects them both very, very deeply."

So Diana and the Punisher work together—but they're a rogue Amazon Princess and a man called Trevor Castle, an amalgam of Steve Trevor and Frank Castle. Now husband and wife (yikes!), they trail their kidnapped son (double yikes!) to Apokolips, where they're joined by Big Hyppolyta and a whole menagerie of smooshed Fourth World characters.

"I'm throwing everything in here," Ostrander laughs. "If I can find the kitchen sink, it's going in too. We really hit the ground running. I want people to say, 'This one may have been the most unlikely, but it was the most fun.' "

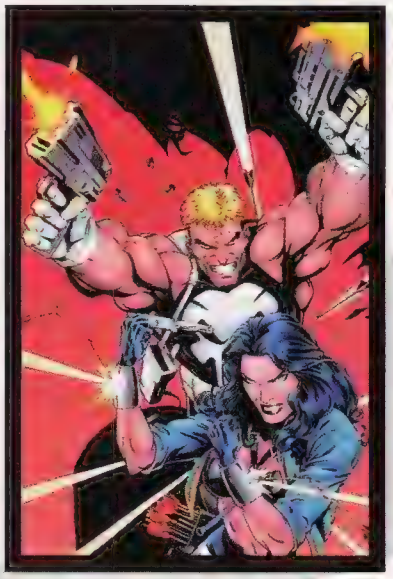
MAGNETO & THE MAGNETIC MEN #1

Key smooshed characters: THE METAL MEN, THE BROTHERHOOD OF EVIL MUTANTS
Writers: MARK WAID & GERARD JONES
Artists: JEFF MATSUDA & ART THIBERT
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: MARVEL

"Gerry and I had to go to our science catalogs for this one," admits co-writer Mark Waid. "We had the name, but we needed metals to match." Bad news—there are only three magnetic metals. So the team consists of Iron (what a stretch), Cobalt and Nickel, plus Bismuth and Antimony, the babe of the bunch. "They're a cross between the Metal Men and the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants," he explains. A robotic Toad certainly strikes fear into *our* hearts.

"We had fun with this one," he says. That's because they first thought up the villain: Magneto's mutant-hating brother Will Magnus, who creates Sinistron, "the ultimate Sentinel." "He's half Brainiac and half Mr. Sinister," Waid explains, "kind of like the Sentinels crossed with Dr. Josef

***Bullets & Bracelets* stars the Punisher & Diana.**



You can count on plenty o' babes, blood & brawls in *Assassins* #1.

Mengele," a Nazi scientist who experimented on prisoners of war. Whoa, history *and* science, all in one issue!

ASSASSINS #1

Key smooshed characters: ELEKTRA, CATWOMAN, DAREDEVIL, DEATHSTROKE
Writer: D.G. CHICHESTER
Artists: SCOTT MCDANIEL & DEREK FISHER
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: DC

Assassins Slade (Dare) Murdock and Elektra (Catsai) Kyle are the best at what they do. Now, the Bad Girls of the Amalgam Universe are commissioned to assassinate the mayor of New Gotham. But to do that, they must confront an array of mercenaries hired to stop them.

"We went through every single mercenary we could find at both companies and threw them all together," says editor Kevin Dooley. The Assassins' opponents include Deadeye (Deadshot and Bullseye), Wired (Cable and Manhunter), and Lethal (Cheetah and Kraven). They also tangle with The Big Question, an amalgamation of Kingpin and the Riddler—and they certainly don't have an easy time of it. "There's no guarantee that both characters will survive," Dooley says ominously.

DR. STRANGEFATE #1

Key smooshed characters: DR. STRANGE, DR. FATE
Writer: RON MARZ
Artists: JOSÉ LUIS GARCIA-LOPEZ & KEVIN NOWLAN
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: DC

"This is the one that has the most to do with the crossover," says writer Ron Marz, partially explaining why he picked it. "It sort of pivots on some of the events in *DC vs. Marvel*."

But he also loves both characters and has never had much of a chance to write them, he adds. "I have an affection for the spookier, darker side of the universes, and this was my chance to play with that." Dr. Strangefate, he says, "is more mysterious and unpleasant than either of his components. He's pretty much an aloof bastard."

Strangefate's manservant, he adds, will be "someone nobody expects." Also showing up will be Skulk (Hulk and Solomon Grundy), the White Witch (the Scarlet Witch and Zatanna), and Frankie Raynor (Frankie Raye and Kyle Rayner).

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY

The amalgamation possibilities are endless. So, needless to say, there were a few that didn't get used—beginning with the Amalgam Comics' name itself.

"Our first choice was 'Fusion,'" says *Marvel vs. DC* co-editor Mark Gruenwald on the naming of the Amalgam Universe. "That's what we called it in-house for the longest time." But he and co-editor Mike Carlin discovered that name already was taken. "I think it's a stronger name than 'Amalgam,' which most kids probably won't know and can't pronounce," Gruenwald laughs. "But it says exactly what the project is. And if you learn a new word from a comic, it can't be all bad."

"I can't tell you how often these characters changed names," adds *Assassins* editor Kevin Dooley. In fact, Dare originally was named Risk and had to change due to trademark conflicts, and the Kingpin/Riddler amalgam—now the Big Question—began life as the Big Clown. "Who was it that once said there are no good names left any more?"

The team considered lots of hero combinations too, Gruenwald says. "The most obvious was to combine the heroes who fought each other in the crossover," he explains. That happened in the cases of Wonder Woman and Storm, as well as with Spider-Man and Superboy. "I thought Super-Hulk would have been an interesting combination, but we went another way."

There were only a few serious arguments over how to combine characters, Gruenwald adds, and they mostly involved second-stringers. "We factored in both the size of the role and the coolest use." Catwoman was one of the few that posed a dilemma, he says, but he couldn't remember details.

Carlin also pleaded memory lapse on unused combinations, citing the time gap since the project's genesis. "Besides, it's not fair to talk about the also-rans," he adds. "Believe me, we threw out all the crummy ones."

How crummy were they? Chuck Dixon says, "I thought the Amalgam Comics' splash pages should say, 'Mort Lieber Presents,' [combining DC editor Mort Weisinger with Stan Lee's original name] but they didn't go for it." He also wanted to combine Bane and Blob. "I thought it was a great visual, but I was the only one who liked it," he laughs.

"They let me use Oliver Queen, Goliath," says Mark Waid. "But they wouldn't let me use the name I wanted: Giant Queen." Another title he ran up the flagpole that nobody saluted was a comic called Stan Lee & His Monster (a take on DC's Silver Age humor book, *Stanley & His Monster*). But his all-time favorite smoosh book would have been *House to Astonish*. "I have no idea who would have starred in it," he admits. "I just like the name, and I'm proud of it."

Peter David, who writes the finale in *Marvel vs. DC* #4, hoped to see the Impossible Man combine with Mr. Mxyzptlk. [Almost any combined name would have been an improvement.] "I also hoped to do more with the team-up between Rick Jones and Snapper Carr, but there just wasn't room."

In fact, someday he hopes to see the ultimate match-up that didn't fit this crossover: Godzilla vs. Giant Turtle Olsen. And his all-time favorite, unseen team-up is still but a dream: the Vision and the Scarlet Witch versus Casper the Friendly Ghost and Wendy the Good Little Witch. Let the voting begin! CS

The fate of the Amalgam Universe may just rest in Dr. Strangefate's grubby paws!

The Doc must confront Access, who "holds the thread of continuation in the Amalgam Universe," Marz says.

JLX #1

Key smooshed characters: X-MEN, JLA
Writers: MARK WAID & GERARD JONES
Artists: HOWARD PORTER & JOHN DELL
Cover price: $1.95
Publisher: DC

Since we're smooshing characters, why not smoosh writers? The scripters from *X-Men* and *Justice League America* join to create the Judgment League Avengers, teaming such characters as Super Soldier, Dark Claw and Goliath (a.k.a. Oliver Queen). But seven other JLAers decide to team with Mariner, who has been unfairly persecuted as the first mutant. Together, these JLX members set off with Mariner to find Atlantis, the original home of the mutants.

But a mutant-hating villain with great technology at his command lurks in the background: Doc Magnus and the Sentinels! This book ties into the other book the two are co-writing (*Magneto and the Magnetic Men*), in which Doc attacks his brother, Magneto.

"These books were great to do," says Waid. "They're self-contained stories like everyone says they want these days, and there are enough side jokes to keep everybody happy."

It's mutant mania as the Justice League merges with the X-Men in *JLX*.

MARVEL VS. DC #4

Key smooshed characters: THE WHOLE SHOOTIN' MATCH
Writer: PETER DAVID
Artists: DAN JURGENS & JOSEF RUBINSTEIN; CLAUDIO CASTELLINI & PAUL NEARY
Cover price: $3.95
Publisher: DC

Arriving one week after the Amalgam Universe hits, this ultimate issue tries to yank apart the amalgamations and put things right. Or, as writer Peter David puts it, "This is the desperate attempt by yours truly to try to actually resolve this sucker in some sort of meaningful and coherent way. I think I have, but whether I've done it well is ultimately up to the fans to decide."

That revolves around Access, who holds the key to restoring the universes. David won't say if the universes get unsmooshed, but we know how we're betting. But do any of the smooshed characters survive? "Who knows?" says David. "This is comic books. If people absolutely love these characters, anything is possible."

The co-editors say that's pretty unlikely. "We have a device that would let us return to the Amalgam Universe," admits Gruenwald. "But we told our creative teams that this was their one chance to fulfill their wildest, goofiest fantasies and that they shouldn't save anything for a sequel. I think they took us seriously. It's a shame you won't ever see these characters again, but many of the creators signed on because it didn't mean a long-term commitment."

But apparently some creators could be talked into it. "I told them I'm ready for a sequel," says Byrne. And Kesel agrees: "I like Spider-Boy better than either Superboy or Spider-Man because he combines my favorite parts of both. I hope they can be done again." Adds Marz, "I want to go back and do this again."

"Anything can happen in the Amalgam Universe," Carlin reluctantly agrees, stressing that there really, truly are no plans. "On this stuff, I never say never."

Craig Shutt, who wrote "Fit to Print" on page 36, would be smooshed into Craig Shapiro in the Amalgam Universe.

"AND THERE FELL A GREAT STAR FROM HEAVEN BURNING."

KINGDOM COME™

MARK WAID ✦ ALEX ROSS

MAY 1996

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THE WIZARD Q&A:
BILLY TUCCI

SHI'S GOT WHAT IT TAKES, BUT CREATOR BILLY TUCCI HAD HURDLES TO JUMP BEFORE GETTING IT THERE

BY ROB ALLSTETTER

Billy Tucci had been up drawing until 4 o'clock the night before. His allergies are acting up on this particular morning, and his head aches. Not the greatest way to start out one of the early days in 1996. But Billy Tucci is happy. Very happy. And he's seen far worse—those days of eating Oodles o' Noodles while struggling to make a living.

Many consider Tucci's Crusade Comics and its *Shi: The Way of the Warrior* the top comic book success story of the last 18 months. Since premiering in April 1994, *Shi*, and the subsequent *Senryaku* mini-series, have become top-10 sellers and an inspiration to many other self-publishers. There have been crossovers with Marc Silvestri's Cyblade and Jim Lee's Grifter. And while Tucci steadfastly refuses to group Ana Ishikawa in the "Bad Girl" genre, *Shi* (Japanese for death) has helped lead to one of the biggest crazes in recent years—female-driven titles.

Who better to turn rags to riches than Tucci, a graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology? The 29-year-old New Yorker is making his mark in the industry—not without a few missteps—and clearly he's doing things his own way.

Success isn't slowing Tucci's drive, either. In this interview, he recalls the early days of Crusade, candidly speaks his mind on the state of the industry and reveals interesting plans for the new year.

Tucci's Shi is as gorgeous as she is powerful

WIZARD: Unlike a lot of today's creators, you weren't a longtime comics fan. How did you get involved?

TUCCI: A friend of mine at college turned me on to comic books. I'd always seen them, knew what they were and might have picked up a few once in a while as a kid, but hadn't paid much attention to them. He turned me on to *The Punisher*, then *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.

I still didn't really pay that much attention to it actually until after I graduated. Then I said to myself, "You know, this might be a nice career to attempt to do." And that was probably the dumbest thing I've ever said to myself.

So you had no idea how much work it was going to involve?

Especially when I decided to self-publish, and I said, "I'll do a color book." This was when I'm working out of my one-bedroom apartment. I had no knowledge on how to do anything...separations, film, the whole color process. I just wanted to make a comic book.

How did you start the company? After doing the convention circuit, did you just decide you were your own man?

Pretty much. I got laid off at designing children's wear. And I was really trying to do freelance work, because I didn't really want to design T-shirts and things like that. I decided I was going to go for it. I had no idea how to start a company. I had no idea about copyrights or getting incorporated or things like that.

I found out that things were a lot easier than I thought. I called information for the United States Copyright Office.

And there really is one, with the papers and all. It cost like $20, and it was the best $20 I ever spent.

Times were really tough, though. I had no money. I had even met with these guys who were going to be my potential business partners; they'd take over the business end and I'd pretty much stick to the writing and the penciling. They had a penthouse on Madison Avenue. But they pretty much had no money and I was doing everything. And they tried to charge me rent for working there. I was pretty much a paid secretary, answering phones. I thought, "Well, this isn't the best thing." And they wanted to own the character. I think common sense is probably my greatest ally, and I knew it was wrong.

It was a bad time. We had already taken out the ads, and I had no money to pay for them. My girlfriend had given me money, and friends from the neighborhood helped. I raised about five grand for the advertising and twisted *Shi* #1 through.

But it was lots of research. I'd go to the library and I'd [research] what a distributor is. It was a lot of trial and error, and a lot of things went wrong. The distributor was going to drop my book, and we had this ugly situation with [prospective] partners. We persevered, though, and the book really rose above it all.

Did you expect it to do so well at first?

I knew the book was going to do well. There was a gap in the market, and female leads were going to be the next big thing. DC wasn't doing much with *Wonder Woman* or *Catwoman*, although Jim Balent was doing nice art on *Catwoman*, it was getting lost in the male-hero glut.

The industry was at a downturn at the time, too. It just seemed fresh, and I guess from the lack of my comic book reading experience, the book looked different. And people took to it. Within a couple of weeks, it started to roll from word of mouth. And the thing was, people were actually reading the book. And I still feel in my heart it's one of the best-read books out there.

Were there times when you had some doubts?

Everything that could possibly go wrong actually did. People were telling me I was insane to try this. But you just had this feeling something was going to happen. It was one of those things when you're working on it, it feels so right and you don't talk to too many people about it. Serendipity plays a part of it.

I had gotten into a fight in a bar and tore the ligaments in my left shoulder, so I was in a figure-eight harness for six weeks, and I couldn't draw. All these things [happened] that could have made us easily quit, but things started to fall in place.

The attitude we had was that if it doesn't succeed, who cares? At least we could always look back and say, "Look what we did." That's the way it was, and it's still like that. I get into trouble when the books come out late, but I'd rather really put everything into it. Every time we attempt to do a book, we attempt to do it like it's the last thing we'll ever do.

You're growing creatively, too.

You have to. You look at *Shi* #1 and you look at *Shi* #6—there's a difference. You have to keep growing in all aspects. It's interesting, because now the characters take over the roles. Ana wouldn't do things now, because she's six issues into a book. We have more history for her and she wouldn't necessarily take [a certain] route.

I don't know how well *Shi* #1 would do in the industry right now. The artwork is getting better, there are more good artists and there are more non-comic book artists coming into the field. So it is getting more competitive as well.

Besides, where's the accomplishment in doing the same thing over and over? You have to aspire to new heights.

What research do you do for *Shi*?

There's a lot of research. It's really a learning process. We have a great time doing it. I had no idea who the Sohei warriors were until Barry Orkin, who works with me and is one of my designers, knew of the Sohei. He had seen them in Japanese woodblock prints. There's so much history with these Sohei warriors, so much intrigue and politics and corruption. It's real exciting. How can you not get excited about feeding your mind? It can only help you. I don't understand why people don't read books anymore.

As far as being different goes, you have great disdain with the "Bad Girl" label, especially when applied to *Shi*. What do you think of the Bad Girl books out there today, and how is *Shi* different?

I don't pay much attention to them. There are books that I know are Bad Girl books and I look at them and try to read them, and I just can't. They're pretty misogynistic.

I gave my book a strong female character. My dad had died when I was really young, so my mother had to raise six of us, with my older sister. I pretty much base things on my mom and my older sister. They really affected me.

We receive tons of letters from women, and I haven't really had anyone complain about Shi that much. I don't think her costume is really skimpy. She doesn't wear a thong, she doesn't have big boobs, she doesn't wear heels, running around and blowing people away.

A lot of those books people are doing—and they gain attention, which is unfortunate—are just crap. And the press comes up with the name "Bad Girl" and these guys say, "That's a good way to make some money." And they'll put out this garbage with this girl with big boobs, a fishnet bodysuit, heels and guns, with really poorly drawn and horribly written stories—if you want to call them stories. I don't see the appeal to it at all. And people are just buying in because they think it's going to be worth money.

That doesn't really work. That doesn't make a good comic book. What people want is quality. Quality books are going to be the ones that last. That's why I'm not too sure about the comics industry.

What do you think is wrong with the industry?

The reason why people are leaving comic books is there aren't a lot of well-written books anymore. There are some, of course, but for the most part they're not.

There are so many great writers in the industry. Just let them have a free reign and let them give it a shot. They love comic books too. They love the characters they're work-

ing with. Listen to them. When some companies go public, the bottom line is money and they're wondering why the books aren't selling like they used to. Bottom line: get good art, get good stories. That's why people read books. That's what comic books are about—to be read.

I want the industry as a whole to do better. We're all in this together. If Superman does better, my book's going to do better. *Shi*'s outselling Superman and Batman books. That's ridiculous. That's wrong. I might be a little bit happy about it, but you have to look at it in the greater picture. Superman's been around for 60 years. My book shouldn't be outselling Superman books.

Where do you see yourself three or four years from now?

Hopefully married, with a kid on the way. With Crusade, it'll be a nice medium-sized company. I'd like to churn out a lot of creator-owned books, to keep the integrity of the books and the characters. And keep doing what I love: comic books and self-publishing. And if things sour completely and I stop drawing or writing and the books fold or fail, I'll look back and say what a wonderful time in my life it was. **W**

Rob Allstetter, who interviewed Kurt Busiek last issue, wouldn't want to meet the Sohei warriors.

SHI ON THE SCREEN

BY ROB ALLSTETTER

Billy Tucci is hesitant to talk about the Shi film he would like to make. "I don't want people to come up to me and say, 'Well, what happened to the movie?' " he says.

Tucci has hooked up with Wallis Nicita, a longtime casting director who produced 1995's "Drop Zone." Tucci feels that the fact that Nicita's a woman will help keep the integrity of the character in a film version.

Tucci says he will be very involved as a co-producer. He is finishing up a treatment and will begin working on a script. He guarantees that if the Shi movie happens, it will not be "a babe action film" and that it would "change the way people look at female leads."

"You would need an actress with a lot of range," he says. "Because even when she wears the white makeup, there's a lot of pantomime going on. You can't just have some hot babe playing her." One actress rumored to be interested is Tia Carrere ("Wayne's World," "True Lies").

Tucci, who says he would design the storyboards as well, is taking the same kind of approach to a Shi film that he takes to the *Shi* comic.

"I would rather have a young director who's eager and wants to make his mark, than a well-known director who just wants to do what the hell he wants with it and make some money off of it," he notes. "I would rather the film be a critical success and a [box-office] bomb than to be a huge [financial] success and be a piece of garbage that I'm embarrassed of.

"I got into this to make comic books. I think it would be a great film, but unless they're going to do it the way I want to, I'll do it 10 years from now myself. It's too personal to me, too good of a story." ■

FUTURE CRUSADES

Shi books will be out every month this year except March. So promises publisher/creator Billy Tucci. And he's getting help along the way.

Shi: The Way of the Warrior ends this year with issue #12, says Tucci, adding that a *Shi: Heaven & Earth* series will appear in late 1996. Mitch Byrd (*Guy Gardner: Warrior*) and Tucci are splitting the art duties on #8, with Byrd drawing #9 and #10, and Tucci handling #11 and #12.

Tucci explains, "I feel, with me being buckled down by the business, people would rather see my story—with me and Peter Gutierrez writing and someone else's art every month—as opposed to seeing my book every two or three months. People want the story and they tend to get a little antsy [with delays between issues], and I don't blame them. We're giving the people what they want this year: more Shi books and more Crusade product."

Among the product, according to Tucci:

- *Crusade Special: Shi vs. Tomoe* #1 (April). This major 48-page issue is written and drawn by Tucci, who says, "Tomoe's been dishonored, and the only way she regain [her honor] back is to finally have a showdown with the 'Shi Killer,' which is the reason why the [Nara Warriors] have come in the first place. And incidentally, she finds out that it's her best friend, Ana."
- *Atomik Angels* (May). The four-issue mini-series "deals with nanotechnology. It has teenagers working for the government as a team, and it's got a real strong manga influence. Nelson Asencio's drawing it and Peter Gutierrez's writing it."
- *Dogs of War* (June). A black-and-white book written by Tom Sniegoski (*Vengeance of Vampirella*) and drawn by Marc Masztal, "which is basically about an anthropomorphic lone wolf and cub starring my Doberman Gypsy and Tom's sharpei Spencer."
- *Demon Gun* (June). "A black-and-white book about the old west that Gary Cohn is writing and Barry Orkin drawing."
- *Lethargic Lad* (June). A three-issue mini-series starring Greg Hyland's popular small press character.
- *Tomoe: Kietsu* (summer). Similar to last year's *Shi: Senryaku* mini-series, which featured several depictions and explanations of the 36 war strategies Shi uses in battle.
- *Rekishi* (August). "A book about Ana's history that's more of a sourcebook." ■ *John B. Lacey & RA*

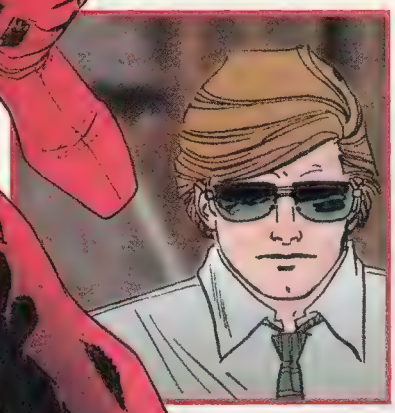
Shi and Tomoe are set to face off in April

Wizard casts the Daredevil movie!

Casting call 14

Daredevil is a classic Marvel hero who's got tons of cool things going for him. First of all, he's blind, but he's got a heightened radar sense that let's him "see." Second, his secret identity is practically untouchable as he's a blind lawyer. And finally, he's got a cool-as-hell costume. So with all these components in place, why not make a really cool movie out of 'em?

All we need are the classic supporting characters and villains to texture the world of our hero, and we're set to go! If it were up to us to make this flick, casting would look somethin' like this...



DAREDEVIL

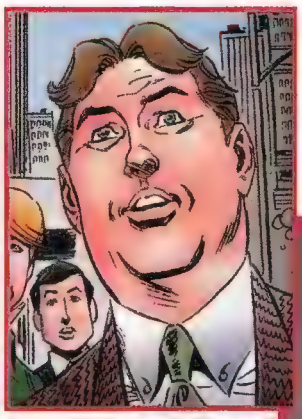
Portraying DD and his alter-ego Matt Murdock would be Brad Pitt ("Seven," "12 Monkeys"). He's a guy who doesn't shy away from tough roles.

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos: Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

BULLSEYE

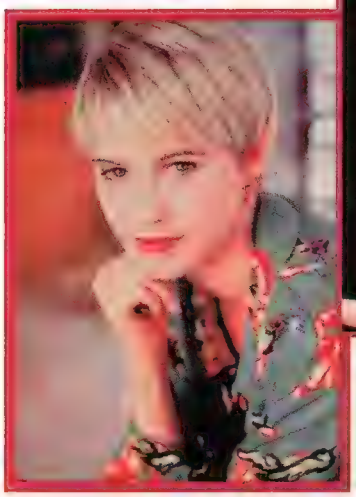
Woody Harrelson ("Natural Born Killers, "Money Train") has proven he can play a pretty wacko psychopath, so he'd be absolutely perfect as Bullseye.

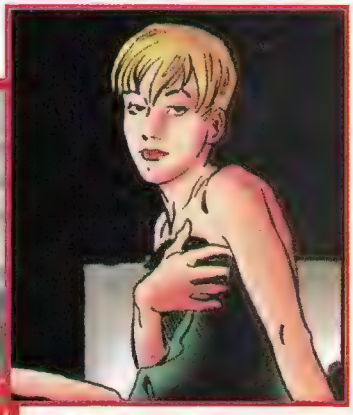


FOGGY NELSON

We need somebody fat and dopey. So why not Andy Richter from "Late Night with Conan O'Brien"?

PHOTO COURTESY NBC





KAREN PAGE

Josie Bissett ("Melrose Place") would be perfect as DD's current main squeeze.

PHOTO COURTESY MTV

ELEKTRA

Our professional assassin and DD's nutty former girlfriend would be played by the lovely MTV host Daisy Fuentes.

KINGPIN

John Rhys-Davies ("Sliders") played the Kingpin on a horrific Hulk TV-movie a few years back, but he didn't shave his head. In our flick, he would.

BEN URICH

This chain-smoking *Daily Bugle* reporter—and good friend to Daredevil—has Roy Scheider's ("seaQuest DSV") name all over him.

STICK

Lance Henriksen ("Aliens," "The Quick and the Dead") would be great as DD's blind and mysterious mentor.

TYPHOID MARY

Andie MacDowell ("Four Weddings and a Funeral," "Unstrung Heroes") would be able to show more range as this schizo killer who's always messin' with DD's mind.

NINJAS

You want ninjas? Well, we've got lots! We figgered we'd just borrow 'em from the "American Ninja" series. They won't mind.

PUNISHER

WWF wrestler Razor Ramon has the look we need for Frank Castle and, besides, we all know those wrestlers sure can act!

PHOTO COURTESY WWF/TITAN SPORTS

So there you have it. The Man without Fear in a movie that'd certainly kick some hellish butt. Word on the street is that a real movie is in the works from director Chris Columbus ("Mrs. Doubtfire"), so hopefully he'll see our picks and cast accordingly. Hey, stranger things have happened. **W**

The Wizard staff hangs around circus freaks. We love 'em.

Peter Kuper

THE SYSTEM

Actions speak louder than words

Three issues and no one's talking

VERTIGO VÉRITÉ

IN COMICS SHOPS THIS MARCH • SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

Peter Kuper—HOT COMIC BOOK ARTIST—ROLLING STONE, August 24, 1995

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Fit to Print

Ten tips to help fledgling letter writers get their letters published

By Craig Shutt

Letter writers don't have the odds in their favor.

Todd McFarlane's *Spawn*, for instance, receives an average of 500 letters per week—and only five are published an issue. Other popular comics, including the X-Men, Spider-Man and Superman titles, also receive far more letters than can be printed.

But, hey, don't let it get you down. In fact, here's how to improve your chances of being published, according to Marvel and DC letter editors, as well as some prominent letter writers.

1. Write a Lot and Don't Give Up

You say you've written five letters in the last three months to different columns and not a single one has been printed? That's not even a decent week's output for a big-time letterhack. Charles Sperling of Flushing, N.Y., says the fourth letter he ever wrote was printed in an issue of *X-Factor*, and then he went 10 months before another one appeared. But he kept at it and soon was being published quite regularly. At his peak, he was writing 20 letters a week.

Carl Pietrantonio of Laredo, Texas, also wrote 20 a week at his peak, while Joey Marchese of Clark, N.J. says he was writing up to 10 a week before comic price increases forced him to cut back. Melissa Page of Nortonville, Ky., writes about seven or eight a week. "Even if the editors aren't printing your letters, they're reading them and seeing your name each month," she points out. "If you're writing good letters, sooner or later they'll decide to use yours because you're persistent."

2. Type It

Yeah, we know—it discriminates against the keyboard-impaired, it's more work and it takes special paper. Welcome to

the real world. "We always look for typed letters first," says Mark Bernardo, assistant editor on the Spider-Man books. "They're easier to read and take less time to go through. Neat handwriting also works."

Ben Raab, assistant editor on the X-titles, and Mike McAvennie, assistant editor on the Superman and Legion books, agree. "Those people made the most effort to make their comments legible, and they deserve first crack," McAvennie says. "I just don't have the time to labor all night trying to decode someone's handwriting."

Page hand-prints all her letters, she says, as did legendary letterhack Uncle Elvis Orten, who recently gave up the whole letter-writing gig. Jeff DeMos of New York City says he scribbles out his letters while he watches TV, then types them up later, giving him a chance to edit the text.

3. Keep it Short

Pietrantonio set up his computer to print his comments onto postcards, ensuring he doesn't write too much. Some writers consciously stick to one or two double-spaced pages. Editors say they prefer short letters, between one and four paragraphs on average.

"Brevity is the soul of wit," says Bernardo, coining a phrase. He suggests that writers who send 20-page analyses should indicate at what point after a few paragraphs the letter can be cut for printing, leaving the rest for feedback. That way, the editor doesn't have to make the cuts.

Editors say they prefer to edit only for clarity and grammar, and hate cutting letters—writers agree that their words seldom are altered. But everyone has at least one story of a letter that was edited in a way that disappointed them.

4. Make a Point

"Some writers seem to start writing before they know what they want to say," says Page. Marchese always tries to comment on both writing and art, making sure to mention the inker. Others focus on the writing alone. "I say what I liked, what I didn't like and get out," says Pietrantonio. Sperling says he tries to be a fan, critic and historian in each letter.

5. Avoid the Word 'Sucks'

Editors say they don't mind negative comments, if they're constructive. "If the letter doesn't say why something's bad, there's no point to publishing it," says McAvennie. Adds Raab, "We know we can improve, but we need to know how." Says Bernardo, "Calling us Nazis doesn't help your chances. If you don't like it, say so in a calm and rational manner." McFarlane has said he deliberately chooses critical letters because they're "more interesting," but he realizes that doing so skews the reader's perception of the mail he receives, which is overwhelmingly positive.

Sperling says he tries to convey a tone of dismay that the issue wasn't up to past standards of the title or creators. Adds Neil Ahlquist of Minneapolis, Minn., "I try to keep my letters light, since comics are supposed to be fun." Points out Marchese, "Comics creators and editors are people too. You want to avoid being vitriolic."

6. Show Your Personality

Some editors like goofy letters, some don't. "I don't want to divert readers from the story," says McAvennie. Bernardo sometimes uses humorous letters "if they're really short." Adds Raab, "If you have a sense of humor, express it in your writing."

Some writers make their letters distinctive. Page has used different colors of paper, and she admits that being female helps her stand out as well. Ahlquist uses different typefaces to match the book's "style," such as blocky for *Batman* and more delicate for *Wonder Woman*. Uncle Elvis, of course, had name recognition. Letter editors say they are also receiving more envelope artwork and enjoy it, even if they don't have any way to publish it.

7. Emulate What Works

Page learned tips from Uncle Elvis, who lived near her. Others suggest outlining the points in several printed letters to see how they flow, and note the style of writing used.

8. Write Early

"If I'm keeping up with the mail flow, the early guys have a better shot," says Bernardo. "But schedules sometimes prevent that and the mail piles up." Other editors suggest writing within three weeks after the book comes out, to ensure your letter is in the first stack read.

9. Write to the Letter Column

The letter column's address can be found somewhere in the column. Also make sure your letter's addressed to the specific title of the letter column; for example, address your letters to *Uncanny X-Men*'s letter column title, which is "X-Mail," while *Amazing Spider-Man*'s is "The Spider's Web."

Addressing mail to the company or character slows things down. Mail addressed to creators is forwarded directly to them without being considered for publication. Pietrantonio sends an envelope full of his postcards to companies that publish a number of comics he wishes to write to. He marks them "Open in Mailroom and Distribute." Inside are his postcards addressed to the proper columns, saving him lots of stamps.

10. Write to Everyone

Creators at small publishers and self-publishers get far less mail, offering a better chance at publication. Some of them even take the time to reply personally.

In addition, writing seven letters to seven publishers gives you a wide range of editors' tastes to fit; if you write seven letters to the five Superman books and two Legion books, they all wind up on McAvennie's desk.

Many editors remember their frequent letter writers, and they enjoy meeting correspondents at conventions. A few hackers admit they hope to use their letter-writing "fame" as a stepping stone to submitting professional work. It also greatly improves the chances of receiving preview copies of upcoming comics. "It's nice to create that tie," says Page. "It makes you feel like you're in between regular fans and pros." **W**

Craig Shutt, who talked with Strangers in Paradise*'s Terry Moore last issue, uses those cool comic strip stamps on all his letters.*

FIRST LOOK

SPIDER-MAN: LEGACY OF EVIL

SPIDEY AND THE GREEN GOBLIN FACE OFF AGAIN IN APRIL

EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW about Spider-Man and his arch-enemy the Green Goblin will be explored in the painted *Spider-Man: Legacy of Evil* which hits the streets in April.

"In terms of a painted project, I think this combines the best of both worlds," explains editor Tom Brevoort of the one-shot that features a Kurt Busiek story and painted art by Mark Texeira. "This will be a very modern looking, dramatic, powerful look but it's also going to have a classic sensibility underneath it."

Spider-Man: Legacy of Evil is a present day adventure that opens with the kidnapping of the son of Harry Osborn (the second Green Goblin) by criminals who, during the kidnapping, mention something quite revealing about the Green Goblin legacy. Spider-Man, aided by reporter Ben Urich, goes through the extensive Green Goblin lore to find out what it all means as the two of them attempt to rescue the kid before it's too late.

"Everything you need to know about the history between Spider-Man and the Green Goblin will be in the book," offers Brevoort. "It explains the relationship between them within the context of a very modern story."

Spider-Man: Legacy of Evil, which features Texeira's first full-length painted work, came about a year ago when Marvel editors Danny Fingeroth and Eric Fein were planning a series of back-up stories for the Spider-Man books under the banner of "Dynasty of Evil." One of the stories evolved into the *Legacy of Evil* storyline and Marvel eventually decided to turn it into a painted book.

Brevoort, who reports that another painted book—this one featuring Spidey's favorite pal, Venom—may be in the works, says that *Spider-Man: Legacy of Evil* will be a stand-alone project. "The end of the story, at least for the time being, is the end of the story. But if the book comes out and does tremendously well, there might be room for a sequel." W

Marc Shapiro, who talked with Jim Lee & Rob Liefeld last issue, is just glad to see any book with Spidey's original costume in it!

BY MARC SHAPIRO

VITAL STATS

WHO?
Spider-Man and the Green Goblin

WHAT?
Spider-Man: Legacy of Evil, a one-shot by Kurt Busiek and Mark Texeira

DEBUT?
Spider-Man: Legacy of Evil is due out in April

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
In a race against time, this story weaves past and present history between Spider-Man and the Green Goblin as a kidnapped child must be found and rescued.

SONIC

Teenage heroes have evolved from plot elements to major fan favorites... and there's no holding them back!

By Matthew Brady

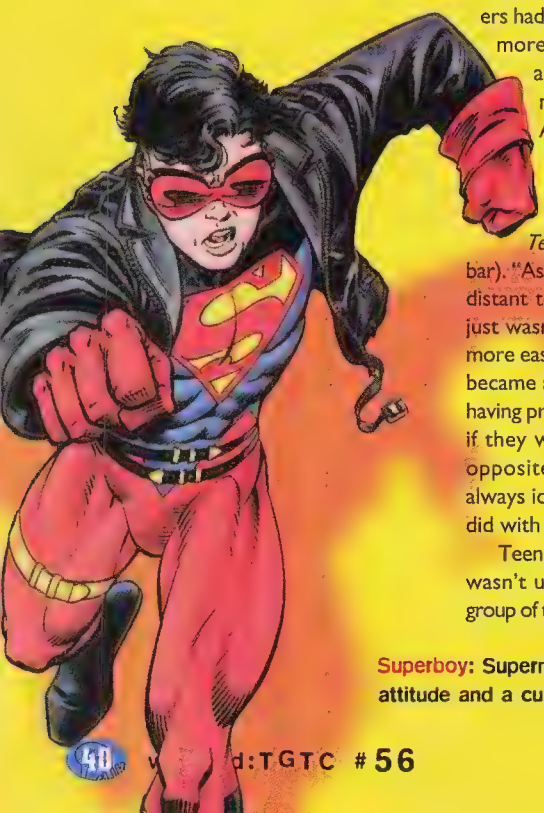
IT ALL BEGAN WITH A YOUNG BOY showing a lot of thigh in 1940. That was the year Dick Grayson joined Batman's side as Robin, the Boy Wonder.

Shortly thereafter came a rapid-fire succession of kid sidekicks: The original Human Torch had Toro in late 1940, while Captain America's Bucky, the Star-Spangled Kid, and the Young Allies showed up in 1941; the Boy Commandos and the Newsboy Legion debuted in 1944; and Superboy made his first appearance in 1945. A new comics sensation had been born: the teenage hero.

According to Denny O'Neil, editor of DC Comics' Batman titles, and Robin's guiding supervisor, these younger heroes served a very useful purpose. "It's always helpful for the hero to have somebody to talk to so he can explain why he's doing what he's doing, and the reader can eavesdrop on this conversation." And having the sidekick be a teen, the adult hero can be more explanatory than they would be in a conversation with another adult.

Also, for the first time, young readers had someone with whom they could more closely identify, rather than the adult and distant heroes like Batman, Superman and Captain America. "As a kid, you can only understand the problems of the adult so far," explains writer Dan Jurgens, who is planning a new *Teen Titans* series for DC (see sidebar). "As a character, Clark Kent was very distant to me. The reader identification just wasn't there. I could always identify more easily with the teen characters; they became a bit more real when they were having problems being accepted at school, if they were having problems with the opposite sex, and that kind of stuff. I always identified with Robin more than I did with Batman."

Teen heroes were a definite hit, but it wasn't until 1958 that a superpowered group of teens made a big splash. The Legion of Super-Heroes—on a visit from the 30th century—bumped into Superboy in *Adventure Comics* #247, and history was made. The Legion was the first example of a group of powered teens for whom getting along with each other was sometimes as much a struggle as beating the bad guys. True, some of their teenage problems involved far-out things like who dated what part of Triplicate Girl, but they were problems with which teens could relate.



Superboy: Superman with an attitude and a curfew

Generation X's Synch joins a barrage of new teen heroes hitting comics

Coming of Age

By the time the revamped Marvel Comics hit the scene in the early '60s, Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko took the teen hero concept and added a healthy dose of reality. While Peter Parker and Johnny Storm had incredible powers as Spider-Man and the Human Torch, respectively, they were each about as normal as the next guy when they were out of their costumes. Peter worried endlessly about his Aunt May and her bills, while Johnny juggled fame, relationships and being a teen idol.

While Peter and Johnny were being as realistic as they could, the times, they were a-changin'. The '60s were cranking up to full speed, and teens were breaking down walls in search of new freedoms. This quest for independence probably played a role in the creation of the Teen Titans in 1964. The group's membership included DC's top kid sidekicks: Robin (who led the group), Aqualad and Kid Flash. The trio debuted in *The Brave and the Bold* #54, and soon after,

60th

got their own series, as Wonder Girl joined.

The Teen Titans quickly escaped from the shadows of their adult mentors, and their popularity grew. The Titans were DC's emissaries to the younger generation. They were young, powerful, acted without adult supervision, and, while their dialogue now seems painfully corny, talked the talk of the hip generation.

Young Means Old

While the teen hero remained a strong force in the comics market for many years, around the late '60s it suddenly wasn't cool to be a teenager anymore.

"Being a teenager just didn't have the glamour or image that it had in the '50s," O'Neil says. "That was the Archie Andrews, Judy Garland type of teenager—when it was cool to be a teen."

O'Neil notes that during the late '60s to mid-'70s, "The teen rebellion was overshadowed by the rebellion in society as a whole, with the hippies, the peace movement and the civil rights movement. That probably helped to steal the thunder from the relatively mild rebellion of the average suburban teenager."

Mark Waid, writer of the teen-driven *Impulse* and comic history guru, agrees with O'Neil about the demise of the teen hero in general, but lauds the young Marvel Comics for keeping teens alive for a while. "The Marvel teens acted more like teenagers than DC's did. It took the rise of Marvel and Stan Lee's characters to point out how old-fashioned DC's characters had become." He adds that DC's creation of Mr. Jupiter, an adult mentor to the Titans, practically ruined the appeal of teen heroes in the '70s. "That was awful. It took away the thing that made the Titans cool: They were four kids that acted on their own, without adult supervision."

Teen heroes languished in the background throughout the '70s, and it didn't pay to be a teen anymore. In the eyes of society, teens were at the forefront of the growing drugs/sex/rock 'n' roll revolution.

A sidekick no more, Robin became Nightwing in 1984

TEEN BEAT

"I plan to do it, I look forward to doing it, and the best we can say at this point is that it's going to happen," says Dan Jurgens, confirming rumors that he will head a Teen Titans relaunch in the near future, with George Pérez inking.

But Jurgens warns fans not to expect any kid with an "R" on his chest, a li'l Amazon princess, or any of the other traditional Teen Titans to be members. "While I have nothing but respect for what Marv Wolfman and George Pérez did [in the '80s revival *The New Teen Titans*], the characters have aged. Nightwing is older. Speedy is older, has a kid and is called Arsenal, while Aqualad may be dead. They've all been through so many changes that to me, the Teen Titans need an entirely new group of kids, so it's going to feature predominantly new characters," Jurgens notes.

Jurgens wants to avoid the "Junior JLA" cliché by keeping Impulse, Superboy, the young Green Arrow and other established young characters out of the mix. "I think it's crucial in a book like this to be able to do a lot of character development, and you can't do that when it's someone else's character," he says. "What I want to do is find maybe one or two existing characters, and then fill the roster with brand-new characters. That way, the stories are all new, the villains are all new, and the direction is unknown so I can surprise the reader and really make it something that is totally its own, rather than borrowing piecemeal from here and there." ■ *MB*

O'Neil, along with artist Neal Adams, illustrated these changes in the critically acclaimed *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* #85-#86, where Speedy, Green Arrow's sidekick, was revealed to be a heroin addict. When confronted by Green Arrow, Speedy lashed out in a manner familiar to teens everywhere: He claimed that Green Arrow, as an adult, just couldn't understand the pressures of a teenager. It was a realistic, but not very pretty, picture of teenage America.

Milestones

The grim view of teenagers changed in 1980, when creators Marv Wolfman and George Pérez launched DC's *The New Teen Titans*. Gone were the jive-talking daddy-o's, replaced by serious-minded older teens wielding a considerable amount of power. Thanks to some new team members, the Titans shrugged off the "junior Justice League" image, and forged their own identity, earning the respect of adult heroes and readers, and creating a best-selling book in the process.

Three years later, Marvel's X-Men spinoff *The New Mutants* exploded onto the scene, fueled by growing mutant momentum.

Teen heroes were back.

These young stars were responsible for some comics milestones in the '80s, and two of the biggest involved the original teen hero, Robin. First, in *The New Teen Titans*, Dick Grayson officially retired as Robin, and adopted the identity of Nightwing. According to O'Neil, it was the first time readers had seen a "promotion" of a comic sidekick to a new identity.

The second milestone was 1988's "A Death in the Family" storyline in *Batman*, where Jason Todd, the second Robin, died at the hands of the Joker. The key feature of the storyline was a 900-number that readers could call to vote on whether Jason would live or be blown to Bat-bits. With the majority of readers voting to off Jason, two things seemed apparent: Readers did *not* like Jason Todd, and teen heroes were again declining in popularity. Something had to be done, and once again, Robin led the way.

Teens for the '90s

O'Neil explains why the teen hero concept needed updating, particularly for Robin. "The old idea of Robin as the laughing boy daredevil worked great for the '40s, but seemed irresponsible for the '90s. The world changed a lot in 50 years, and now you can't pick up a paper without reading about something horrible being done to a child. That led us to rebuild [the current] Robin as a thinker, not just a daredevil. He got the job because he alone figured out who Batman was."

The hugely successful relaunch of Robin led to the character (now Tim Drake) gaining three mini-series, followed by a popular ongoing series. He opened the door for the latest wave of teen heroes, their names reading like a who's who of some of today's most popular characters: Robin, Generation X, Gen[13], Superboy, Impulse, The Ray, Anima (okay, so not all of them were popular).

Gone is the adoring kid sidekick, having often been replaced by the kid smart-ass, who usually demonstrates as much attitude as power. This new generation of teen heroes seems to have everything going for it: They're smart, independent, tough and wildly popular.

As teen heroes have become more complex characters, so have their reasons for existing. "The characters are pretty much 'new' to life," explains *Robin* and *Green Arrow* writer Chuck Dixon. "They're learning as they go along, in a traditional 'rite of passage' story."

Generation X's writer Scott Lobdell agrees. "I think the role of the teen hero is to learn the experience rather than live it. Superman and Batman live the experience every issue, whereas the members of Generation X are learning as they go."

"There's not a whole lot you can do in terms of character progression with a Batman or Superman. With teenage heroes, you have a whole lot more canvas to work on," Waid adds.

But let's not forget about fun. Brandon Choi, writer of *Gen[13]*, stresses another side of today's teen heroes. "*Gen[13]* is a contrast to some of the darker stuff we put out, and we want to keep it far from the grim-and-gritty style of the late '80s and early '90s."

Reality Check

Another issue that writers of teen superheroes have to juggle is giving the characters teenage sensibilities and values while having them be fairly morally upstanding. Combine that with trying to have your character do the right thing without being a goody-goody or too preachy, and you have a real challenge.

"I want to show that teenage decisions aren't easy. All these decisions cost

Jason Todd: Readers voted to kill off the second Robin

you one way or another, especially if you make the wrong one," Dixon says.

Superboy writer Karl Kesel says that his lead character is learning as well. "He doesn't always do the right thing. Superboy is a character constantly making mistakes, but I don't want to preach about those mistakes. If there's a message there, I want the readers to find it for themselves."

"There's a scene in *Generation X* where Paige [Husk] got drunk, and people said I was irresponsible to write that," Lobdell notes. "But I showed the consequences of her drinking as well; she felt horrible, she threw up, and she lost some respect from her friends. I don't think the consequences came from the writer's or editorial point of view, but rather, they came from the character. If you stay true to the characters, they'll provide their own sense of morality."

Waid agrees. "They're the kind of people whose heroic nature comes through whether they're in school or in costume. They're the kind of kids people follow, not the kind of kids that follow other people."

The Future

What does the future hold for teen heroes? Is another decline in popularity on the horizon? In today's market, where the climate is turbulent, teen heroes are still a strong force, and probably will be for some time. As Kesel explains, "Every generation wants to have their own heroes, heroes that aren't the same ones their father, uncle, or even their brother liked. As each generation of comic fans comes of age, there will be new teen heroes for them to call their own."

Matthew Brady, who profiled Green Lantern's history last issue, wants to know if Waid or Campbell will trade their latest Tiger Beat *for an issue of* Bop.

Below: Impulse tackles big teen issues like hairstyling and icky girls

At right: The Gen[13] characters are the fashion plates of the comic world, and they're drawn pretty well too

THE RULES OF COOL

One of the challenges in making '90s teen heroes believable is the creator's ability to make them "hip," complete with correct slang and a modern look.

"When I used to look at comics in the early '70s, some of the artists were drawing kids wearing clothes that went out of style in the late '50s," recalls *Robin* artist Mike Wieringo. "The artists just didn't keep up, and that ruined it for me."

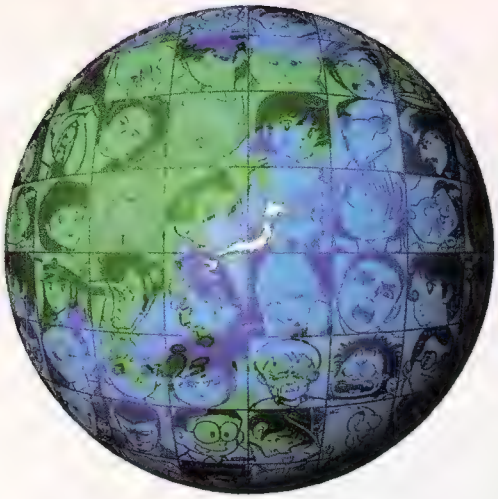
J. Scott Campbell, artist of *Gen[13]*, admits that as he grows older, staying current with teenage trends is becoming harder and harder, but he does have help. "I have a teenage brother and a 20-year-old sister, so I keep in touch with them quite a bit. For fashions, although it's quite embarrassing to buy, I pick up teen magazines. They actually help a lot, since the Gen[13] team is mostly girls."

"We try to keep stuff like *Details* and other 'trendy' magazines in the studio," Wieringo says. "They help us keep up with fashions and hairstyles. Plus, I think all of us in comics are kids at heart, and that helps too."

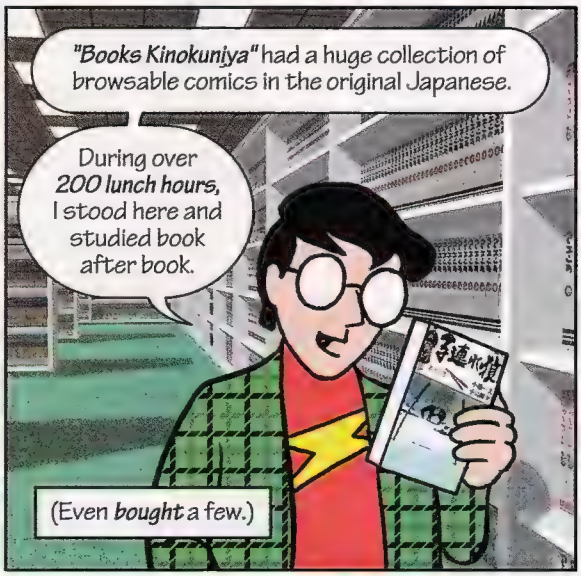
While all the artists admit keeping current with style is hard, they all agree that the writers have the tougher job: putting realistic teenage voices in their characters' mouths, and teenage thoughts in the characters' heads.

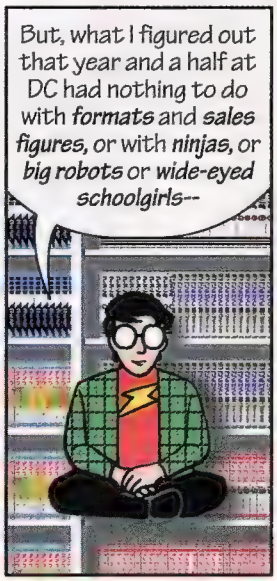
"I go to the mall, keep my ear to the ground and read a lot of teen magazines," *Impulse* writer Mark Waid explains. "It's half trying to keep up with kids today, and half making stuff up as you go. Keeping up can be tough, so instead of what they say, I try to focus on how teenagers talk. That doesn't change."

Some don't find keeping up so easy. "I wish I could say I sat in malls and eavesdropped like Waid does, but some of us have real jobs!" laughs *Superboy* writer Karl Kesel. "I work and rework my dialogue until it honestly sounds like something people say. The only way I can keep up is real blood, sweat and tears. I don't find writing teenagers easy at all." ■ *MB*



UNDERSTANDING manga





The ***real secret*** of Manga's success is a matter of ***technology*** -- the technology of ***storytelling!*** Manga creators use a toolbox of ***narrative techniques*** that can enhance the power of any story.

And nearly ***all*** of these techniques focus on one goal: to ***stimulate involvement.***

Take ***motion*** for example: In America, when I started my own career, ***motion lines*** were the only game in town.

Using motion lines can produce some exciting effects, but their diagrammatic qualities can seem to ***illustrate*** the action, while not necessarily making the reader feel like a ***participant.***

But when a camera moves ***with*** a ***moving object*** it produces quite a ***different image.*** Although the ***object*** may remain in ***clear focus,*** the background is ***streaked*** and ***blurry.***

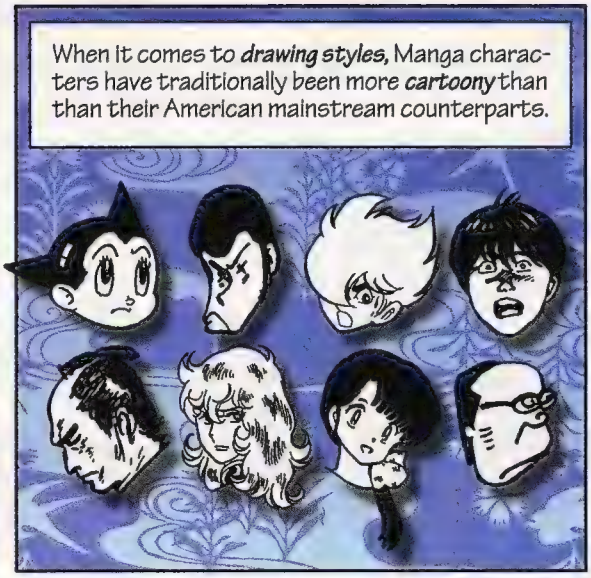
This was the effect that Manga artists began ***adapting*** for their comics a few decades ago.

With ***"moving"*** results!

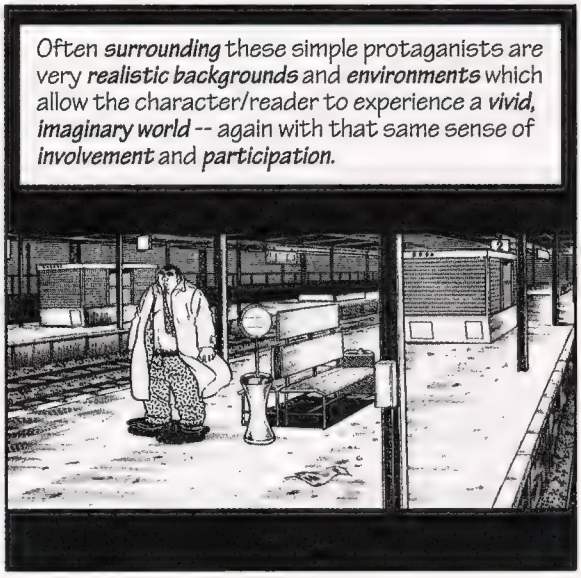
かんにん、容子ちゃん！

Now, Manga readers weren't just ***observers,*** they were ***neck-and-neck*** with the ***action!***

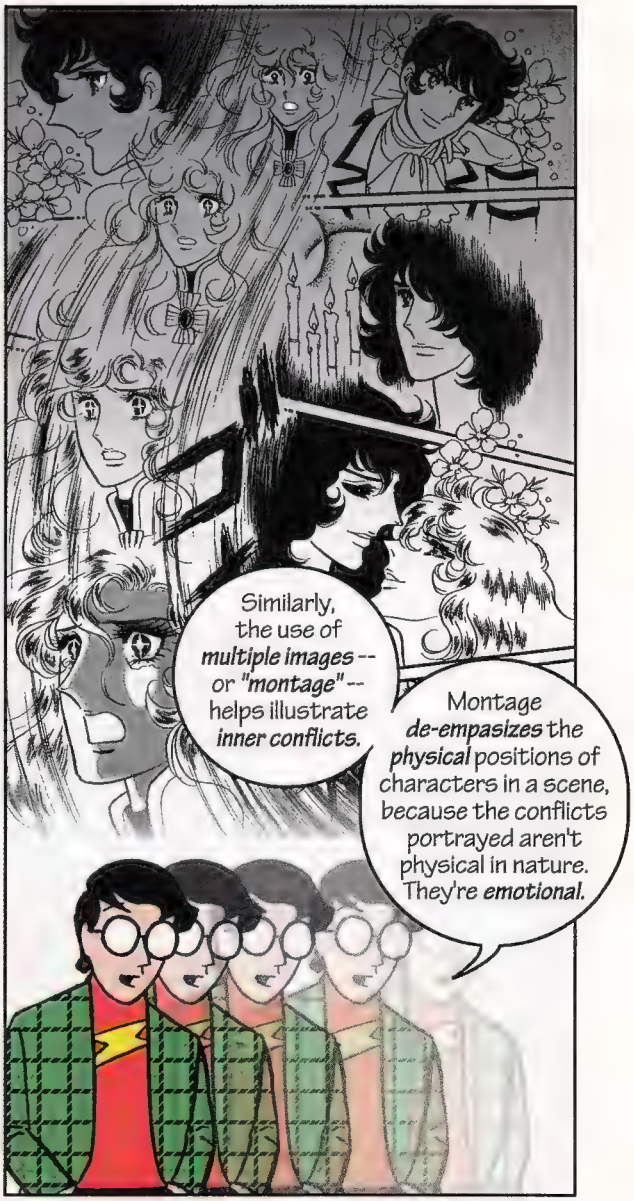
As it turns out, even a simple ***abstraction*** of this effect like ***straight parallel lines*** can indicate motion.



I believe these *spare, carefully chosen lines* promote a kind of *psychological response* in most readers, inviting them to *"get inside"* the characters' heads.



Emotional involvement, is as important as physical involvemet to Manga creators and a key tool for that is the style of *visual distortion* known as *expressionism*--
--the time-honored technique of showing *inner states* through *outer appearances.*


Similarly, the use of *multiple images* -- or *"montage"* -- helps illustrate *inner conflicts.*
Montage *de-empasizes* the *physical* positions of characters in a scene, because the conflicts portrayed aren't physical in nature. They're *emotional.*

The *best* tool for emotional involvement that Manga artists have may simply be *length,* since it takes time to really *"get into"* a story.

Like this little samurai story by *Sampei Shirato. volume one* here is about *380 pages.*
This was *volume one* of about --

um...

I think there were about *forty volumes.*

In the past decade, the U.S. has seen a large ***influx*** of ***translated manga.***

And it's had a noticeable ***influence*** on ***American*** artists just as ***manga*** artists have been taking on more ***western*** influences.

Art history shows us that ***exciting things*** can happen when different cultures ***exchange ideas*** and that's ***beginning to happen*** in comics as we near ***the year 2000.***

No ***one*** country has ***all*** the answers. The Manga industry has its ***faults*** just as ***ours*** has its ***strengths.***

But I think the Japanese may hold the ***key*** to at least one crucial ***part*** of comics' ***hidden potential.***

The power to ***transport us*** into the ***mind*** of ***another*** and through thier eyes into ***another world.***

To ***unlock*** that power, we may have to consider some ***new ideas,*** but if ever there was a time for new ideas --

--this is it.

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IN ENGLISH

The **Chronos corporation** is one of the largest industrial conglomerates in existence, with a host of branches all over the world. They are also involved in some highly unusual lines of research, manipulating human DNA to construct monstrous transforming creatures called Zoanoids. Those subjected to the traumatic Zoanoid process who survive, can hide in human form, waiting for the order to emerge and destroy.

The most advanced phase of the Chronos weapons development plan is the construction of the three 'Guyver' units, biomechanical armour devices based on alien technology. A young high school student named Sho stumbles upon one such unit during a treacherous attack by a Chronos operative, and unwillingly becomes the first human to interface with the bio-booster.

While the unit is active, Sho is The Guyver, an insectoid killing machine with a lethal array of internal weaponry. No Zoanoid is a match for the hybrid even while Sho is still discovering the unit's capabilities, something he must do with haste when his identity becomes known to Chronos. From that point on, the Guyver is Sho's greatest curse, and his only salvation. Chronos wants the unit back, and will stop at nothing to retrieve it, targeting Sho's school, friends, and anyone around him with their most vicious and terrifying Zoanoids. Sho must fight to survive, and to protect those he loves-but will the fight be won at the cost of his soul?

Released by MANGA Video in 12 episodes, The Guyver is the animated brainchild of comic artist Yoshiki Takaya. Encouraged by his editor to make his initial combat-suit design more grotesque, Takaya struck upon the idea of an alien, biological device, a living armour that bonded itself organically to its host. This took the series to a darker direction than was originally intended, and won Takaya such devoted fans that The Guyver manga is still being published today.

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THE MOUNTAIN OF MANGA CONTEST

Been readin' all about manga this issue? Has it whet your appetite for the "Big Eye" stuff? Well, just because two of the biggest manga mavens on this side of the Pacific are also two of the nicest companies around, you could walk away with enough manga to satisfy even Galactus' hunger. And all you have to do is be able to write your name.

THAT'S IT.

HOW TO PLAY

IT'S A RANDOM DRAWING, SILLY. FILL OUT THE COUPON, SEND IT IN AND YOU COULD WIN OUR...

...Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will receive a veritable mountain of manga! It includes: Courtesy of Dark Horse Comics (the manga masters), comics and trade paperbacks of the titles *3x3 Eyes, Appleseed, Bubblegum Crisis, Caravan Kidd, Dirty Pair, Dominion, Domu, Ghost in the Shell, Gunsmith Cats, Legend of Mother Sarah, Oh My Goddess!, Orion, Outlanders, The Rebel Sword, Venus Wars* and *Version.* Whew! Courtesy o' Graphitti Designs (the maestros of merchandise), the five-volume *Akira* hardcover series and a cool-as-all-get-out limited-edition Tetsuo statue. (He's the main guy in *Akira!*)

This contest is sponsored by Dark Horse Comics, Graphitti Designs and hey—even Studio Proteus! Those guys do most of the translation work for Dark Horse's manga.

The Legalese

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Dark Horse Comics, Graphitti Designs, Studio Proteus, their immediate families and that rat Tetsuo. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Mountain of Manga Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winner. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of the contest winner and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. "Kaori! *Kaoriiiiii!!*" **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by April 30, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. The prize winner will be selected by random drawing among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on May 15, 1996.

For the name of the winner, available after May 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Mountain of Manga Winner, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Mountain of Manga Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is April 30, 1996.

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AMERICA

By Carl Gustav Horn

N MANGA

When it comes to drawing influences, many American comic artists are turning Japanese

"Kids tend to like eyes that are bigger, gestures that are more outrageous," says J. Scott Campbell on the allure of manga and anime. "When I look back upon the past five years, the more popular styles tend to be more cartoon-oriented, like the style of Todd McFarlane or Art Adams."

Manga (Japanese for "comic books") and anime ("animation") are neither new in Japan nor in America, but the influence of both among American comic book artists, once limited, is now splashing to the surface of some of the industry's hottest titles. Besides Campbell, who has brought a manga style to the superhot *Gen13* title, there's Joe Madureira who has done the same with *Uncanny X-Men*. And there are other high profile artists who have been influenced by this Far Eastern style, like *Monkeyman and O'Brien*'s Art Adams and *Understanding Comics*' Scott McCloud, to name a few.

And all of them have their own personal reasons for these manga and anime influences.

JOE MADUREIRA

One of the hottest young artists today, due only in part to his work on *Uncanny X-Men*, Joe Madureira became attracted to both manga and anime for their unrestrained—and often unexplained—modes of action.

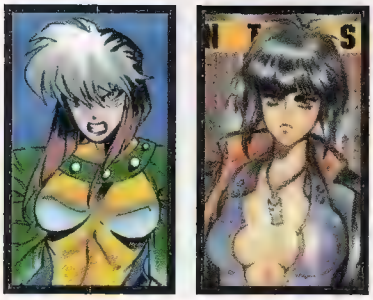
He refers to the anime video "Giant Robo," where a character throws axes from his sleeves and chops down helicopters. "Here in America, people analyze everything and ask, 'How does he do that?' While in Japan, they do off-the-wall stuff," says Madureira. "It just happens, dammit!"

The manga/anime bug bit Madureira while he was attending high school. "There were a few people who'd have video tapes they would find at comics shows," he explains. "It was the cool thing to come up with new ones, and we would trade them. The first one I saw was 'Akira.' I thought, 'Wow, this is so cool!' "

Now, Madureira has an entire bookcase full of manga and anime paraphernalia. These days, he's watching the "Fatal Fury" movies, "Bastard!!," "Giant Robo" and "Ninja Scroll." But when it's manga, he "buys whole shelves."

Although he counts Kosuke Fujishima (see "Manga's Big Guns" sidebar) as his favorite Japanese comics artist right now, he was an early convert to Masamune Shirow, especially his *Ghost in the Shell* series. In fact, Madureira says he copied the hairstyle Shirow drew for *Ghost*'s Major Kusanagi by giving it to Rogue during last year's "Age of Apocalypse" storyline.

Then there's the anime feature "Ninja Scroll," which was a major influence on



Rogue/Kusanagi: Separated at birth, or just at the hair salon?

a recent *Uncanny X-Men* story, #329-#330, which Madureira refers to as the "crazy ninja issues." "The X-Men staff are all anime freaks now," says Madureira. "If I can have my way, I want to have more special moves, flashier powers and cool effects [like manga]. Slowly but surely, we'll transform X-Men into a cool manga book."

Madureira definitely feels that manga and anime are going to be a continuing influence on American comics. However, he looks at it as not just pollinating the current industry, but—more importantly—affecting an entire new generation of kids who haven't picked up their pencils yet. "Anyone who's into comics now is probably into anime in some form. Most of the comic stores carry it now, there's the video games [with the anime style], and all the anime dealers at the trade shows. Kids who are into comics these days are already into anime too, while people already in the industry are just going to it for fresh ideas."

J. SCOTT CAMPBELL

Gen13's J. Scott Campbell isn't quite such a booster of anime in particular as Madureira because, to him, it's only one component of his love for animation in general that informs the "cartoon look" of his work. "I'm kind of attracted to big eyes and cute features," he admits.

When it comes to manga, Campbell, like Madureira, is quick to bring up Masamune Shirow as "probably my biggest influence—*Ghost in the Shell* blew me away. The compelling visuals, when I first saw [Shirow's sketchbook collection] *Intron Depot*, were enough to get me very interested." Sitting down to Kenichi Sonoda's *Gunsmith Cats* also struck Campbell in a positive way. "It felt like looking at anime in a comic book form—such a sense of motion, of well placed action. Guns whipped out. Cars zoomed past."

Campbell also likes plenty of Japanese animation. "They make adult-oriented animation for the audience that wants it—you just don't get that here in America." Like Madureira, he's into "Fatal Fury" and "Ninja Scroll." But, unlike Madureira (who bought the rare laserdisc box set of the grand, intricate anime film "The Wings of Honneamise"), Campbell says, "My style is not so serious, not so 'grand scheme.' " That's why, as much as he likes the acclaimed "Akira," he actually enjoys watching the more modest "Battle Angel," which "really impressed me—it's one of the best." Campbell's high praise is based on the anime's simpler, stripped-down schemes of action and characterization. "I can't get too wrapped up in big stories," he admits.

Campbell feels that the manga influence on American comics is "stronger than ever." He believes that, just as it is with himself, the more cartoon-like look is popular with the general readership. To Campbell, manga is all a part of that "cartoony" process.

ART ADAMS

Then there's *Monkeyman and O'Brien* and *Godzilla* artist Art Adams. Madureira cites him as "my major early influence." Yet Adams himself takes neither the effect he's

J. Scott Campbell adds the manga touch to Image's *Gen13* comic.

Manga Glossary

ANIME: The Japanese term for animation.

MANGA: The Japanese term for comic books.

BIG EYES: The first thing many people ask about manga and anime is, "Why are the eyes so big?" While some manga artists like Katsuhiro Otomo (see "Manga's Big Guns" sidebar) are known for more "realistic"-looking characters, many more draw their characters with oversized pupils that have an expressive and/or attractive effect. Masamune Shirow ("Big Guns" sidebar) points out that "big eyes" ultimately derive from the early and powerful influence of Walt Disney cartoons (i.e., Bambi) on the Japanese industry and suggests this question comes up more because Japanese people are seen as having "small" eyes, and not because "big eyes" are in themselves strange to Americans. ■ *CH*

had nor his early start on manga too seriously, explaining, "Ten years ago, I just saw Japanese comics and liked 'em." Like almost every American who gets introduced to manga, Adams couldn't read Japanese but was nevertheless attracted. "I bought it for the pictures," he says.

Adams was buying the collected Japanese volumes of Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* long before Epic started publishing the title in the U.S. He'd pick them up at the longtime mecca for Northern California manga fans, the San Francisco branch of the international Japanese bookstore, Kinokuniya.

Unlike either Madureira or Campbell, though, Adams doesn't feel strong enough about any anime influences to name specific movies or videos that have had an impact on him. But, like the younger artists, Adams once again brings up the name of Masamune Shirow. "I'm a big fan of his—*Appleseed*, *Orion*, *Dominion*, *Ghost in the Shell*. I first discovered *Appleseed* many years back, and I think he's influenced quite a few people in the [American] industry since then."

However, Adams is able to add a critical view on the man who appears to have had the most influence among manga creators on American comics: "[While] I like the energy that [Shirow's] storytelling style conveys, sometimes that storytelling becomes weak and it falls down in favor of his fancy page layouts. But he's usually so energetic that he makes it okay anyway."

SCOTT McCLOUD

Like Adams, Scott McCloud would rather talk about manga, not anime. However, his careful examination of the medium has convinced McCloud that manga could indeed be the key to revolutionizing the industry. Of all American comics professionals, none have made such a systematic study of manga as McCloud. Although his comic book *Zot!* broke early ground for the manga influence in the U.S. when it was published through Eclipse in 1984, his most important communication to the American comics world is *Understanding Comics*. This graphic-novel primer—detailing how the form tells stories—spends much time deconstructing the many innovations of comic techniques that first appeared in Japan. If *Manga! Manga!* is your history text when it comes to the medium, *Understanding Comics* is definitely your required reading for "Manga Engineering 101." (Or you can just check out McCloud's "Understanding

Art Adams' Godzilla shows the artist's appreciation for manga monsters.

Manga's Big Guns

KOSUKE FUJISHIMA (kohhh-skay foo-jee-shee-mah): The new jack on the American manga scene, writer/artist of Dark Horse's *Oh My Goddess!* and *You're Under Arrest!*. Known for his depictions of motorcycles, cars and airplanes, but most particularly for his long-tressed "goddesses" decked out in elegant, exotic fashions.

KATSUHIRO OTOMO (kah-t'soo-hee-roh oh-toh-moh): While he is the author of Dark Horse's *The Legend of Mother Sarah*, the artist/writer of *Domu* and a longtime fixture on the manga scene, his fame rests firmly on *Akira*, the over 2,000-page epic published in the U.S. by Epic Comics. Otomo has a highly realistic style and is considered the master of perspective and architecture in manga. He has always had an *avant-garde* reputation and has been highly successful designing TV commercials and print ads as well as manga.

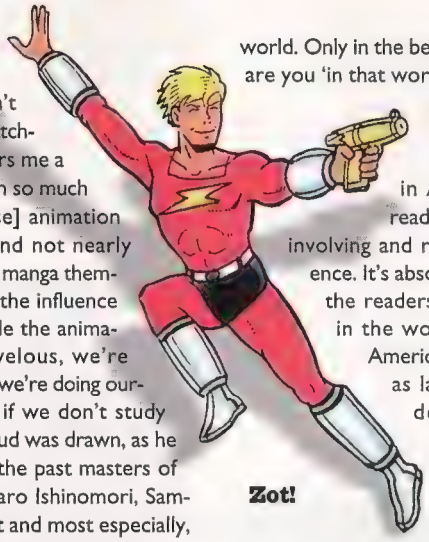
MASAMUNE SHIROW (mah-sah-moo-neh she-roh): A former high-school art teacher. Shirow is reclusive and rarely photographed ("Masamune Shirow" is not even his real name). The manga creator is famous for *Dominion* and *Appleseed*, published in the U.S. through Eclipse, and *Orion* and *Ghost in the Shell*, published in the U.S. through Dark Horse. Shirow is known for his intricate, detailed style, sexy women, lush use of screentones, and is perhaps the most admired manga artist among American fans in terms of technical skill.

KENICHI SONODA (ken-ee-chee soh-noh-dah): Manga writer/artist, and one of the most popular character designers in anime, who found acclaim with *Gall Force* and especially *Bubble Gum Crisis*. A big fan of American films like "Dirty Harry" and "The Blues Brothers," he set his first original anime video, "Riding Bean," in Chicago, from which he spun-off his manga *Gunsmith Cats*, running in Japan since 1991 and currently being published in the U.S. by Dark Horse. Sonoda knows his cars, his guns and his girls but of the manga artists mentioned here, he probably receives the least respect in Japan because he is seen as too "otaku" (loosely meaning "fanboy"). By this, it is meant that Sonoda's ways are seen as non-conformist in a conformist society, plus the subject matter of his work is considered amoral and is often frowned upon. ■ *CH*

Manga" segment on page 44.)

McCloud doesn't spend much time watching anime. "It bothers me a lot, that there's been so much talk about [Japanese] animation affecting comics, and not nearly enough study of the manga themselves, which were the influence for the anime. While the animation is really marvelous, we're comics artists—and we're doing ourselves a disservice if we don't study the comics." McCloud was drawn, as he remains drawn, to the past masters of the medium—Shotaro Ishinomori, Sampei Shirato and, first and most especially, manga pioneer Osamu Tezuka whose comics from the late 1940s started the ball rolling for comic books in Japan.

"If there is one single idea that underlies the theories behind manga technique, it's the idea of placing the reader inside the story, of giving them a role to play—the idea that the story surrounds *them*," says McCloud. "What I feel we desperately need here is narrative density. For your money [with a Japanese comic book], you really get a chunk of story, and you can spend some time in that world. Only in the best of [U.S.] comics are you 'in that world.' There are values in manga that could be the key to reviving comics in America: making reading comics a more involving and rewarding experience. It's absolutely crucial that the readers lose themselves in the world of the story. American comics are not as lasting and not as deep. We could also learn from manga's diversity of marketing, its diversity of different genres."



Nevertheless, McCloud has seen definite progress towards American comics learning the lessons of manga. "You could go back to every single book on the stands in the early 1980s, and never see the [manga] technique of subjective motion. You now see it routinely—especially in Image comics, where you see it constantly. The international exchange of [comics] ideas continued—in the '70s there was more of an influence from European comics. In the '80s it shifted to Japan." Moreover, this exchange should not be one-sided: "If there's one great strength of American comics, it's our anarchy—so many individual voices that have little to do with each other—our great variety. The history of American comics has many trees and many roots, whereas Osamu Tezuka is the undisputed trunk, the single column of manga."

IS MANGA THE SAVIOR OF THE INDUSTRY?

With the comics industry currently experiencing a slump, many—like McCloud—believe that manga's growing popularity can create a resurgence.

Campbell, however, is a little uncertain as to what role the Japanese style might play in reviving the industry. "I think the industry's in a slump because there's nothing really going on in it right now; it's not as exciting as it was to us a few years back. I don't know if the Japanese influence alone can turn it around. Maybe a bigger injection of it might help because chromium covers and big crossovers are starting to wear a bit thin."

Japanese Manga

Manga are popular in Japan to a degree that is unmatched anywhere else in the world. Of all the books and magazines published in Japan, some 40 percent are comics (1992 figures, sales by unit). A popular comics anthology magazine, *Shonen Jump*, has sold in excess of five million copies per week, and circulation's over one million are relatively common.

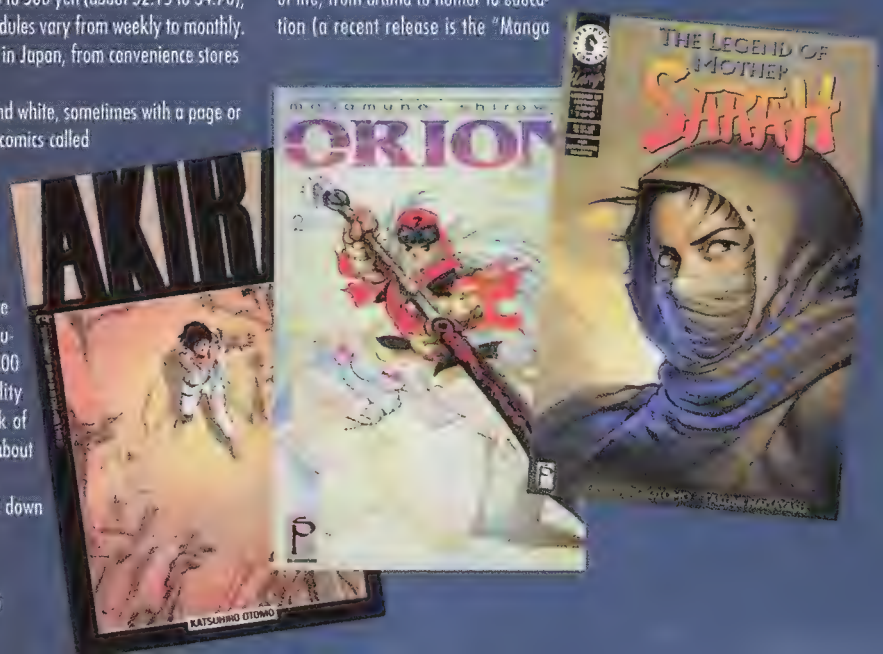
Manga are published first as magazines—ranging from saddle-stitched anthologies of about 350 pages (15 to 35 stories in each) to perfect-bound tomes of over 1,000 pages. They tend to be cheap—from 230 to 500 yen (about $2.15 to $4.70), depending on page count, and publication schedules vary from weekly to monthly. Manga can be found for sale almost anywhere in Japan, from convenience stores to subway kiosks.

These stories are almost always in black and white, sometimes with a page or two of color at the beginning. Four-panel gag comics called *yon-koma* are also popular, and most magazines carry several strips. The magazines tend to be directed at specific audiences, with the primary divisions being young boys, young girls, adult men and women.

Most of the stories are serializations (some running for thousands of pages), and are regularly collected into books (*tankobon*) of 180 to 300 pages. These books are printed on high-quality paper (as opposed to the cheap, recycled stock of the magazines), and sell from 390 to 500 yen (about $3.65 to $4.70).

While comics are often somewhat looked down upon in Japan, and even considered by some to be "just for kids," they are taken far more seriously than in most of the rest of the world, where they are commonly ghettoized and sneered at as being suitable only for subliterates.

Perhaps the easiest way to perceive the place of manga within Japan's culture and publishing industry is to consider it a true, separate media—not unlike television. Comics in America are, by and large, primarily about costumed superheroes. By contrast, in Japan, the manga art form is used to deal with every conceivable aspect of life, from drama to humor to education (a recent release is the "Manga



Adams is even more skeptical about the effect the Japanese influence could have on reviving the American comics industry. As to whether he thinks manga and anime can do the trick, he says, "Probably not. The things that are wrong with American comics are not the storytelling and the artwork, but too much corporate thinking, sales gimmicks, too many books being written by editors, and the general treatment of creative people." According to Adams, a mere "injection" of the Japanese style into the industry unfortunately can't solve those kinds of problems.

THE FUTURE OF MANGA

A renaissance for American comics from manga? Like Columbus, artists here are sailing west. And, unlike him, they're actually going to find Asia. As mentioned above, Japan is still largely an undiscovered country when it comes to its wealth of comic book styles—many still unknown even to those who count themselves influenced by manga. The old stereotypes get flipped on their head, as American comic creators study, learn and incorporate the original techniques of storytelling that Japan has developed on its own during the last fifty years. But America, with its free spirit and individuality, could take these techniques to unforeseen places—provided more American comic companies come to regard story and artwork as more important than mergers and acquisitions. The future, like manga, could look quite cool. W

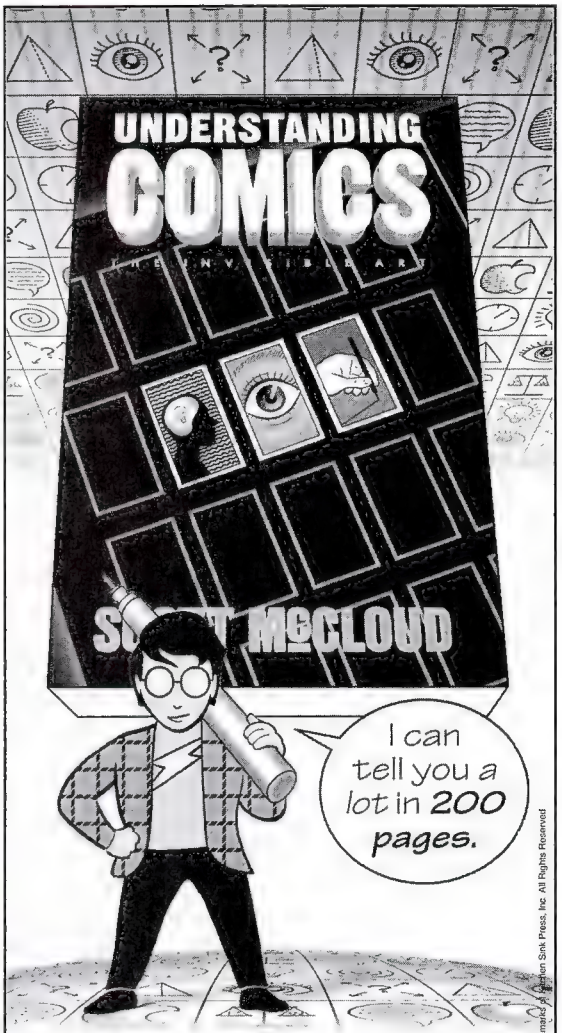
Carl Gustav Horn is an associate editor at Animerica: Anime and Manga Monthly *and he likes listening to Soundgarden's "Superunknown" on repeat play. He also writes "Manga Scene" every month in* Wizard.

Guide to Estimating Sewer Construction Costs"). Whatever your personal interest, it is quite likely that there's a manga made just for you.

Artistic standards for manga are rather looser than for comics in most of the rest of the world, with a strong story taking center stage. As long as the artist meets a minimum standard of competency (and has an appealing style), he'll be accepted—as long as his stories are good. There is a popular type of *yon-koma* that is usually drawn by disgruntled ex-office workers, both male and female. The style is simple in the extreme and could certainly be mastered by almost anyone with a few months of effort. But it is the humor and insight of these comics that make them popular, not their artistic rendering. Here manga could almost be compared to the American newspaper comic strip where a number of great gag writers with simplistic art styles have found success (such as Gary Larson and his "Far Side" or Cathy Guisewite's "Cathy").

Four or five years ago, manga publishers and publishers of erotic manga in particular, received a severe blow. Erotic manga had been pushing the boundaries of acceptability for some years. The bulk of these comics were low-circulation magazines sold by small companies, and were often hard to find outside of specialty stores. But more graphic nudity and depictions of sex began to appear in the more mainstream magazines. Practically all the publishers were to blame, but the ax fell on Shogakukan, whose biweekly magazine *Young Sunday* was publishing a comic called *Angel*. Since then, most manga publishers have been running scared, and many smaller publishers have gone out of business because of public backlash.

Nowadays, the future of manga looks promising as it is influencing the Western world and beyond. Though the manga reprinted in America centers mostly on high-adrenaline entertainment, manga's acceptance will be complete when subject matter about everyday life can thrive in America. ■ *Toren Smith*



"If I knew half as much as Scott, this would be the book I'd write!"

—*JIM LEE*

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Fax of Life... and Death

Joe Kubert's *Fax From Sarajevo* details war-torn Bosnia

"This book is not fiction," says Joe Kubert of his forthcoming war documentary *Fax from Sarajevo*. "It is a diary of life as it was lived in a captive city."

Well known for his fictional war comics, including *Sgt. Rock* and *Enemy Ace*, this summer Kubert presents a more personal—and true—war story in *Fax From Sarajevo*, the diary of one man's harrowing experiences in the Bosnian war zone.

The four-color, 144-page hardcover book from Dark Horse Comics depicts the ordeal of Ervin Rustemagic, Kubert's friend for 20 years and his European agent for five, as he struggled along with his family to survive during 1992 to 1994.

Rustemagic operated his Strip Art Features artist-representation agency from Sarajevo until 1990, when he and his family left. Convinced that peace was near and feeling homesick for friends and family, Rustemagic and his wife and two children returned to Sarajevo in late 1991. Two days later, Kubert says, the war intensified, and "the country closed up as tight as a drum."

Rustemagic's facsimile machine was his only means of communication, as it could access communication satellites. For two years, he sent messages to whichever friends he could reach, including some in France, the Netherlands and Switzerland, and Kubert in America.

Kubert says he received as many as four faxes a day detailing the horrors and frustrations Rustemagic experienced. "I must have thousands of faxes giving me a detailed story of their entire time under siege."

After nearly dying in a bomb blast, the family decided to flee, and they escaped late in 1994. "By the time they got out, their story had become such a vivid thing for me that I felt it was important to do a story about it for my own sake," Kubert says. "I had no idea if it would be financially successful or not."

Kubert will have the book completed by early 1996. It will be structured into 12 12-page chapters, each will open with a fax setting the stage for that chapter and will end with another fax. In between will be Kubert's visualization of that sequence.

Once the book was well under way, Kubert showed it to a variety of publishers, hoping for some interest. "I wasn't sure anyone would be interested, because it's not the usual kind of comic book material, and I didn't want it produced as a comic book," he explains. To his surprise, most of the major comic book companies made offers to publish it. After what a spokesman described as "a heated bidding war," Dark Horse acquired the rights and has placed the hardcover on its June solicitation schedule.

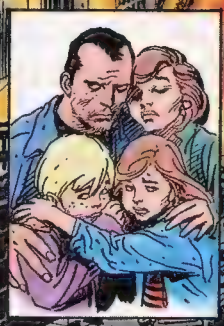
And already the buzz is out on *Fax From Sarajevo*. The first chapter was distributed at book fairs last year in Chicago and Frankfurt, Germany, to generate early bookseller interest. On the strength of that material alone, Kubert earned the 1995 Oesterheld Plaque, a prestigious Italian award presented to work noted for "promoting exceptional understanding between people."

Kubert is gratified by the early acclaim, but that had nothing to do with his determination to publish the book, he says. "Even if only three copies were going to be printed and sold, it would have been fine with me. This was something I really felt I wanted to do and see in bookstores. I did it for myself." W

Craig Shutt, who got the skinny on Strangers in Paradise *last issue, communicates with the world through his blender.*

By Craig Shutt

FAX FROM SARAJEVO



"[THIS BOOK] IS A DIARY OF LIFE AS IT WAS LIVED IN A CAPTIVE CITY."
—JOE KUBERT

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March 21, 1992

Fax to:
MURIEL & JOE KUBERT
Dover, New Jersey

Dear Joe & Muriel,

Although the situation in Bosnia is not clear and calm at all, I decided to go back home and will leave on Sunday morning, by car, together with Butzo, my assistant, who came here two weeks ago to help me finish the last things and pack up for the trip.

We will overnight in Germany Sunday night, and will also have to overnight Monday night either in Austria or Slovenia, to be able to arrive home for the daylight.

Therefore, please, direct all your mail, faxes and/or phone calls (after March 24) to our Sarajevo office:

STRIP ART FEATURES
Georgi Dimitrova 49
71000 SARAJEVO
Tel. (38-71) 455-225, 544-037
Fax (38-71) 46 43 41, Telex 41539 saf

In case you have some communication difficulties and cannot reach us by fax, use the fax number of our Dutch office (31-8340) 63 165. The person in charge of SAF B.V. HOLLAND is Mrs. Ali Magnin-Bulten and she will do her best to forward your fax to us in Sarajevo. The lines between Holland and Sarajevo are usually good.

Love,

Greg Capullo's

KRASH COURSE

STORYTELLING AND PACING, PART 1

This month, we're gonna tackle one of the most important elements in drawing comic books. .telling a story with the use of pictures. "But, Uncle Greggy," you say. "What do you mean, *one* of the most important elements? Aren't storytelling and pacing *two* elements?" I'm so glad you asked!

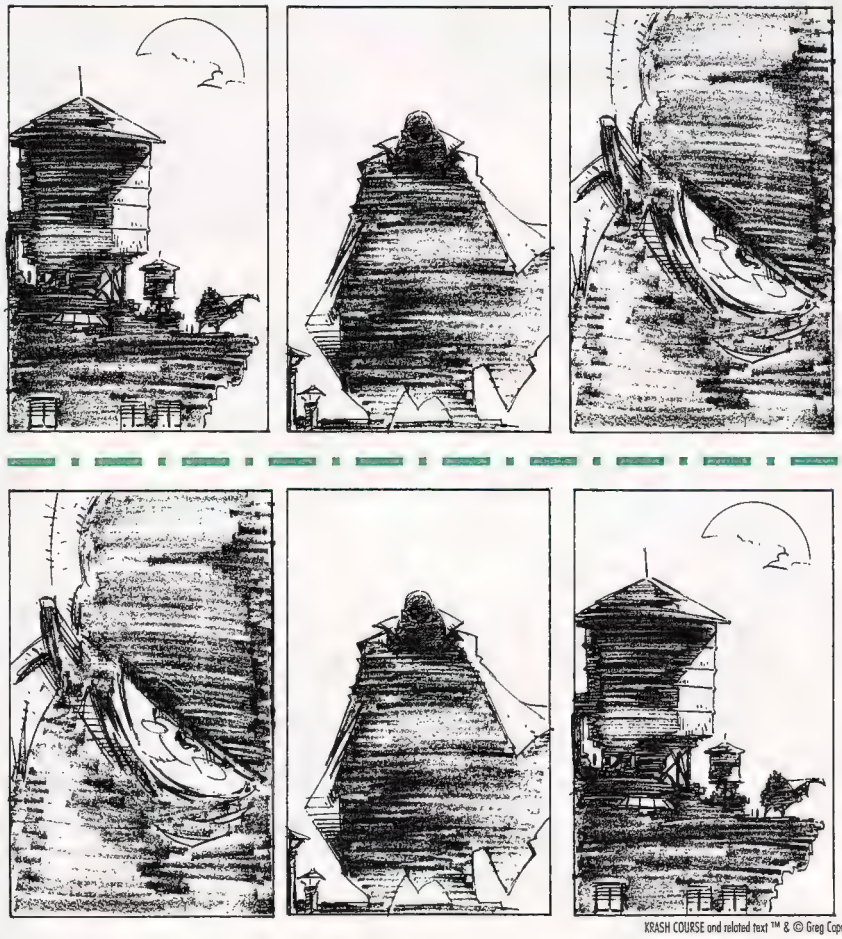
The reason I said *one* instead of *two* is because I see them as inseparable. However, I'm going to attempt to separate them as best I can for you, so you'll fully understand the whole idea clearly. (First, let me apologize to Frank Miller for my having the audacity to instruct a class on storytelling when a master like Frank is out there. But, due to the fact that Frank doesn't give lessons, it's up to me to show you the ropes! End of Frank Miller butt-smooching segment.)

Let's begin our lesson by defining storytelling and pacing. Storytelling gives the reader visual information that, when strung together, tells a tale. (Even though we'll cover pacing next month, I'll tell you now that it is the rate of speed at which you give them that information!)

1. place your order

For the first part of this lesson, we'll deal only with storytelling. First on the list is the order of the information given. You can tell the same story many different ways by the order in which you string together the information. Each way will have a different feel, so it's up to you to decide which approach will best serve the tale being told. Base that decision on how you want your reader to feel.

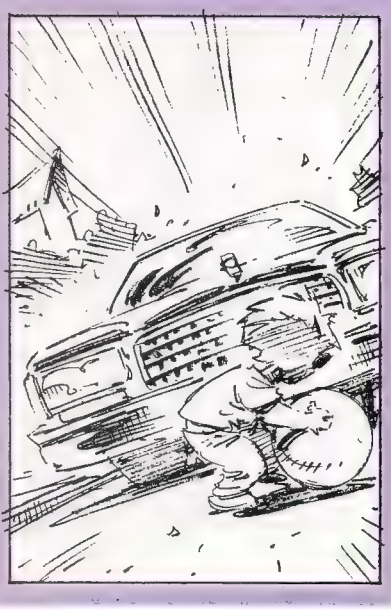
For instance, you may begin a scene with a long shot allowing the reader to familiarize himself with the surroundings, then bring him in closer in a comfortable manner, or you can do just the opposite. By starting in close, you create some mystery because the reader doesn't have much information at that point. This can be a great set-up for some big shocker when you finally do pull back and show whatever you wish.



KRASH COURSE and related text ™ & © Greg Capullo.

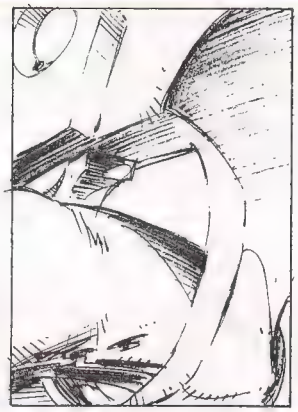
2. back and forth

Another method you might try is intercutting action. Here you introduce two separate pieces of action simultaneously to the reader before showing him how they relate to each other. You can really build some drama with this technique.



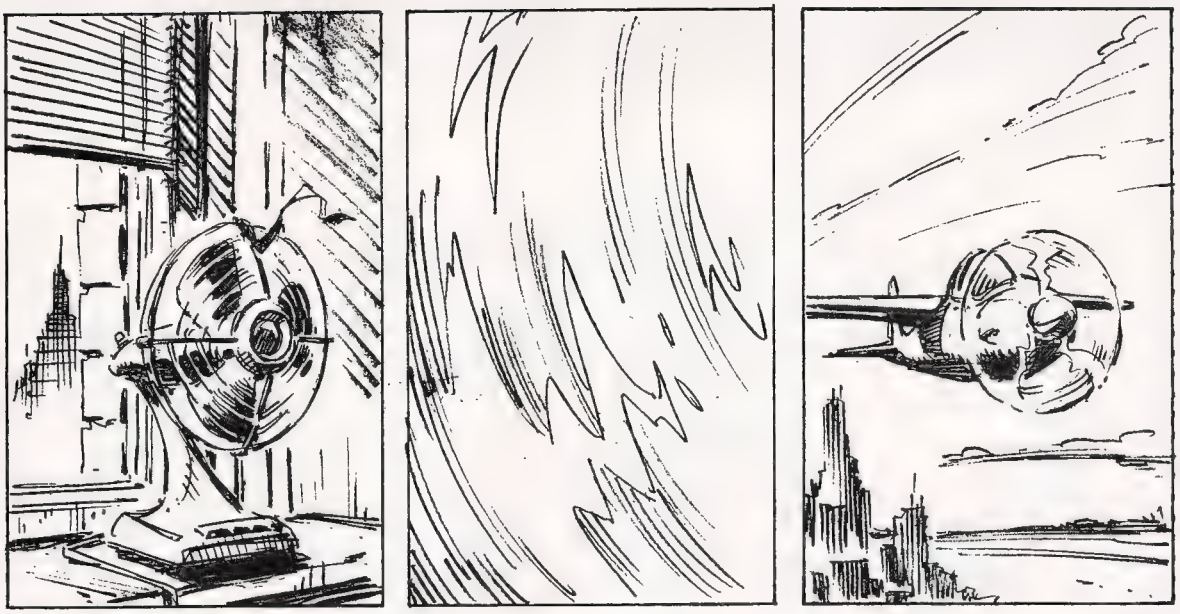
3. less is more

You may also take a minimalist approach to conveying the info to the reader; this too can be quite dramatic. For example, if you show the reader a gun, then show him a spent shell casing, with just a minimum of information you've told him that the gun was fired. Be careful when using minimal information that you make sure it is clear and universally understandable. In other words, use a symbol that everybody knows!



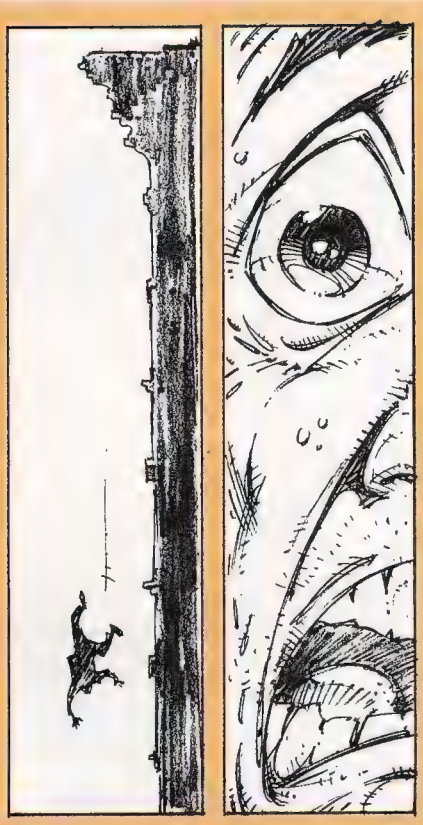
4. even flow

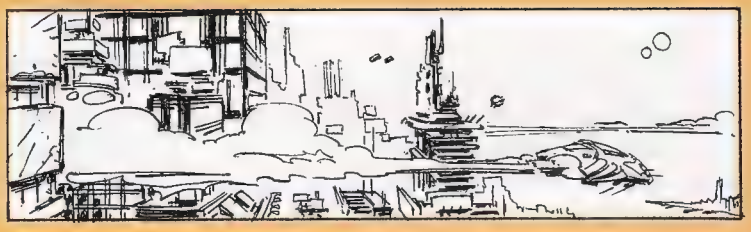
Sequential panels can be fun to use sometimes. This is where you would set up multiple panels all the same size and follow the action without changing the reader's viewing position. Make sure the action is smooth-flowing. If it's too choppy, the effect will be ruined. The reader should be made to *feel* the action as well as see it!

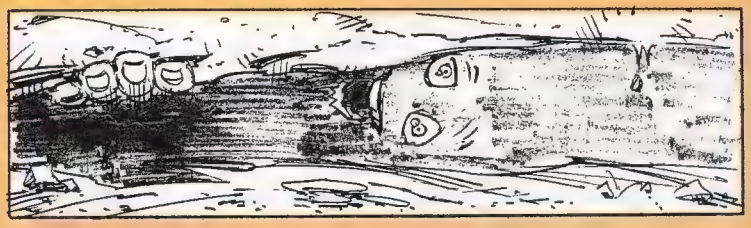


5. fan out

If you're looking for a way to offer a transition from one scene to another, you might want to think of creative ways to segue (pronounced "seg-way"). This is where you would draw (quite literally) a parallel between two separate scenes. You do this by beginning the next scene with something (whatever you'd like) that bears a resemblance to the last picture of the previous scene. Take this fan-to-propeller sequence, for instance; with three panels, I've switched from one setting to another, but I've connected the two in an interesting way. For a transition between two scenes featuring people, you can use anything from coffee mugs to patterns on a person's shirt, or even show the two people in different locations watching the same TV program.







6. good shape

Format is something else at your disposal. Unlike a movie or TV screen, where you're limited by its unchanging dimensions, comic panels can be modified to suit your needs. Therefore, you can use a panel's shape to accentuate the feeling you're trying to put across to the reader.

7. the objective method

Storytelling is about making the reader feel a certain way, so it is important how you wish to portray a given scene. There are three ways: objective, subjective and P.O.V.

With the objective approach, the reader is kind of sitting off on the sidelines watching things. Whether it's a shot including people, places or objects, the reader isn't placed within the scene. Hence, he can view the scene objectively.

8. the subective way

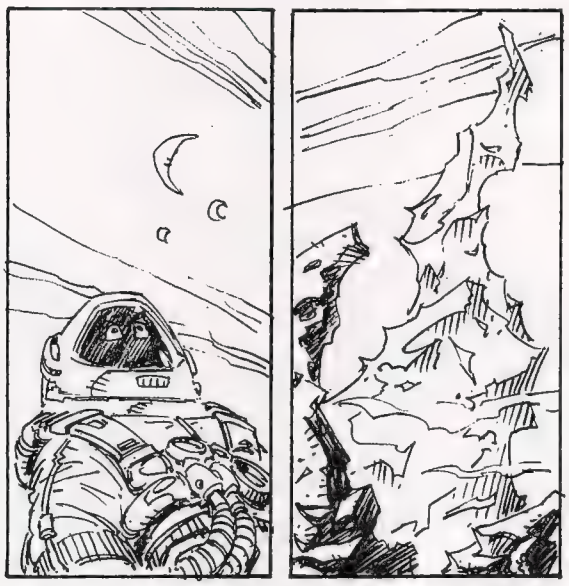
If you take the next example, the shot would become subjective, because the big guy is now looking directly at the reader. You can do this sparingly for a jarring effect or, like a "Friday the 13th" movie, you can show much of the story as if seen through the eyes of the character. To sum up the subjective shot, when you establish character-to-reader eye contact, you're subjecting the reader by placing him directly in the scene.

9. P.O.V.

Lastly, we have the P.O.V. (point of view) approach. The P.O.V. shot is as close to subjective as you can get while remaining objective. You can make a landscape (or whatever) subjective by first showing a close-up of the character looking at something. The reader will understand this to be his P.O.V. Likewise, when you stand the reader close to one of the characters in the scene, he becomes more involved. He zooms up close and personal. So, when you cut to your next shot of the other character's close-up, it becomes a P.O.V. shot. Just make sure the character doesn't look directly at the reader.

These are some of the basic approaches to storytelling. The mixing and matching of these techniques, and when you decide to use each type of particular approach will become your very own storytelling style. Next month, when I discuss pacing, you'll have even more possibilities to play around with. It's as endless as your imagination! So look forward to next month, and till then. .keep the lead burnin', tough guys! **W**

Greg Capullo can be seen every month penciling Spawn, *published by Image Comics.*



THAT'S NO LADY!

BUT THEN AGAIN, PAPPY ALWAYS DID SAY TO CATER TO A WOMAN WITH A WHIP. OR A SWORD. SO IF WE WAS YOU, COWPOKE, WE'D BE A-LOOKIN' TO BELLY-UP TO THE BAR AND ORDER

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THIS OFFER EXPIRES APRIL 30, 1996—SO MOVE IT, PARDNER!

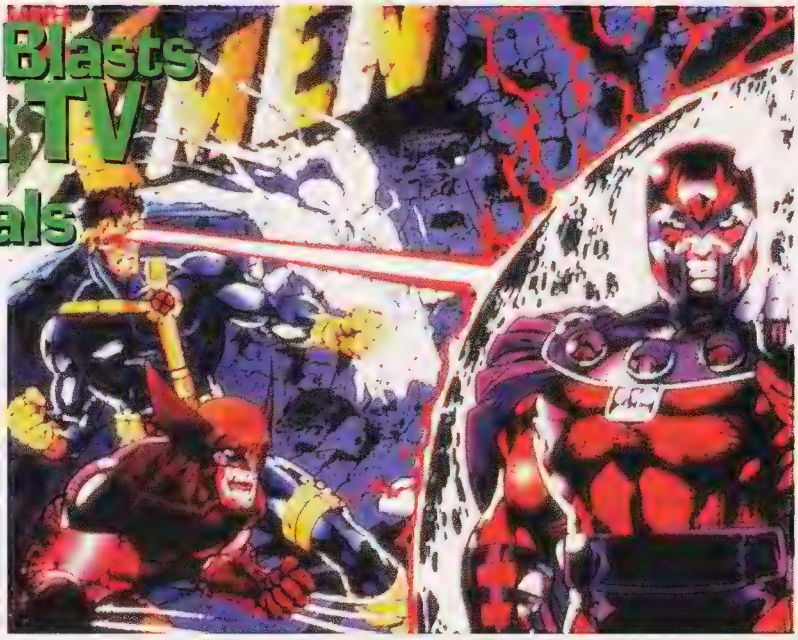
Lady Rawhide ™ & © 1996 Zorro Productions

TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

MARVEL Blasts into '96 with TV & FILM Deals

By Rob Allstetter



CAN X-FANS EXPECT AN X-MEN FLICK BY X-MAS?

X-Men for X-Mas? It seems unlikely, but 20th Century Fox wants to get the long-awaited live-action X-Men movie into theaters by the end of this year.

Marvel's Avi Arad, an executive producer on the project, told *Wizard* a final script, which combines elements of drafts by Andrew Kevin Walker ("Seven") and Laeta Kalogridis, is nearing completion. Discussions with prospective directors continue, while Richard Donner and Lauren Shuler-Donner are the film's producers.

"The script is going to concentrate on the two worlds of Professor X and Magneto and how they basically combine in the mind and soul of Wolverine," Arad said. "So, Wolverine is really the centerpiece. It's how and why Wolverine becomes an X-Man. What is the motivation to turn a lone wolf into—almost—a team player?"

Arad declined to play any guessing games in terms of casting. "I can tell you there are a lot of people who I know or who I've run into who want to be involved. They have kids who are into X-Men or are X-Men fans themselves," he noted. "We'll get great names."

Asked how soon pre-production would need to start for the movie to be in theaters by Christmas, Arad said, "Now!"

"We are already recruiting some of the greatest Marvel artists for production designs and so on. I think X-Men—moreso than most comics—had such great art and great thinking...about things like what the Weapon X lab or Danger Room really looked like," Arad noted. "There are so many good things to draw from, and it'd be nice to have the people who drew them involved. It would enrich the movie."

SURFING THE ANIMATION AIRWAVES

The much-rumored Silver Surfer animated television series is officially a go for Fox. The first episode could be on as a special event by February 1997. The series, which will likely start in the fall of 1997, will be produced in-house at Marvel Films—just like "Spider-Man" is produced—and a creative team is being assembled.

"He'll be roaming the galaxies," Avi Arad said. "The Infinity Gauntlet will be a big part of it; call it 'Looking for the Force,' if you will."

Marvel is also working with Fox on a Captain America series that will follow Silver Surfer on the air. Meanwhile, an Incredible Hulk animated series will start on the United Paramount Network in 1997. The first episode could appear as a special event as early as this November.

Production of "X-Men" has moved directly to Saban Entertainment, now that Stephanie and Jim Graziano have shut down Graz Entertainment to work for DreamWorks. It appears there will be six episodes of "X-Men" beyond the original 70-episode order, and one new story in the works involves Wolverine teaming with another Marvel character in the days before Logan joined the X-Men.

New World and Genesis Entertainment are not taking out any new episodes of "Fantastic Four" and "Iron Man" for syndication. However, the 52 total episodes already produced will likely be rebroadcast next fall at a site to be announced. Larry Houston, a producer of "X-Men" and the past season of "FF," has left Marvel and is working on the new Jonny Quest animated series for Hanna-Barbera.

SPIDER-MAN SWINGS ON

The growing pains have long been over. John Semper, producer and story editor for the Spider-Man animated series, has Spidey in full swing now.

"We're hitting our peak and it keeps getting better and better and better," Semper told *Wizard*. "It was very frustrating for me when we were writing seasons two and three, that the only thing on the air was season one. People were liking it, which was great, but I just felt we had gone so far beyond season one. By the time season one hit the air, to me it was very old hat.

"I'm very thrilled that we now have season two on the air, because as far as I'm concerned, that's where the show really starts and where the show becomes everything I wanted it to be. We're now writing season five, and it's powerful stuff."

Despite stiff competition from "The Mask" on CBS, "Spider-Man" has been a ratings monster for Fox. It is the only Saturday morning series to simultaneously be No. 1 in both of the key demographics, ages 2-11 and ages 6-17. And it has done so several times.

Like the second season—and all following it—the third season of "Spider-Man" next fall will be one 13-episode story arc. This one is called "Sins of the Fathers."

"It occurred to me and the writers that we had a lot of great stories in the Spider-Man universe to tell that revolved around father/sibling relationships," Semper said. "I have to give credit to [executive producer] Avi Arad for the title of this season."

Harry Osborn, Felicia Hardy, Mary Jane Watson, Randy Robertson and Alistaire Smythe are among the characters whose relationships with their respective parents will be explored.

For those viewers who love superhero guest stars, the season opens with a Doctor Strange episode.

"He's always been a particular favorite character of mine and I absolutely, 100 percent knew we would be using him just as soon as we could," Semper enthused. "We're pulling out all the stops. We're spending a lot of money on it and getting a lot of great computer animation. It should be spectacular."

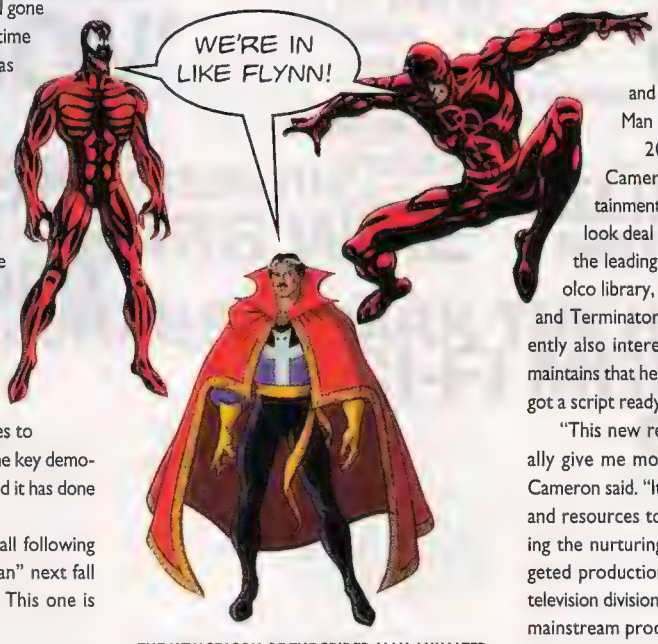
John Vernon, the voice of Iron Man in the 1960s cartoon and of Rupert Thorne in "Batman: The Animated Series," does the voice of the sorcerer. "To me, even in those old Iron Man cartoons, his voice was Doctor Strange's," Semper said.

Semper also fulfilled his casting dreams by getting George Takei—Sulu on "Star Trek"—as Wong. Another "Star Trek" alumnus, Majel Barrett-Rodenberry, does the voice of Anna Watson, MJ's aunt.

It's slobberin' time! One of the new season's highlights figures to be the return of Venom. "It fits right in with 'Sins of the Fathers,' because Venom is the father of Carnage," Semper said, adding, "Yes, we are going to do Carnage."

Yikes! A mass-murderer on Saturday morning TV?

"How can you do a mass-murderer?" Semper asked. "Well, the way you do it is you don't have him mass-murdering at that very moment. It doesn't mean you can't indicate he's done some horrible things. But you obviously can't poke anybody's eyeballs out when you're on the air.



THE NEW SEASON OF THE SPIDER-MAN ANIMATED SERIES WILL MARK THE APPEARANCE OF (FROM L.) CARNAGE, DR. STRANGE AND DAREDEVIL

"It doesn't lessen the severity of the character, because you already know that he's capable of that, so it makes him the same character. I don't believe in changing the characters or watering them down. But we find very compelling reasons why they may not be at that moment pulling off some of the greatest violence of their lives. I've actually seen the episode and it really looks great. I think everybody's going to be surprised and amazed at how true to Carnage it is. And, of course, we have Venom and Carnage fighting—and there you can do anything!"

Another upcoming Marvel guest-star is Daredevil, in an episode Semper described as "looking like [it was drawn by] Frank Miller, but animated." He said it reflects some of the season's best writing and animation. Edward Albert Jr. does DD's voice. The third season also introduces the Green Goblin to the series, and Felicia Hardy's role is built up as her evolution into the Black Cat continues.

Semper, whose main writing team includes Stan Berkowitz, Meg McLaughlin, Mark Hoffmeier and Jim Kreig, is already five scripts into the fifth season, which would complete Fox's initial order for 65 episodes.

"While it's conceivable that after those three seasons, [Fox] might want more episodes, right now, it's not a decision they have to make," said Semper, adding he would like to do 100 more.

Spider-Man designs courtesy of Marvel Films

CAMERON CLINGS TO SPIDEY

Although Carolco Pictures, the company that planned on producing a Spider-Man live-action film, has declared bankruptcy, it still appears that James Cameron will likely be able to produce and direct his long-awaited Spider-Man movie.

20th Century Fox has signed Cameron and his Lightstorm Entertainment to an expanded, five-year first-look deal and has also emerged as one of the leading studios to take over the Carolco library, which includes the Spider-Man and Terminator licenses. Paramount is apparently also interested in the library. Cameron maintains that he wants to do Spider-Man—he's got a script ready—and a third Terminator film.

"This new relationship with Fox will actually give me more flexibility as a producer," Cameron said. "It will allow me to dedicate time and resources to special goals of mine, including the nurturing of new talent in lower-budgeted productions and the establishment of a television division, while continuing to deliver the mainstream product Lightstorm is best known for. Having worked as an independent with Fox over the last three years, I am confident that Lightstorm can make the movies we want to make, the way we want to make them, in partnership with Fox."

Cameron is in pre-production for his next film, "Titanic," which is anticipated for a summer 1997 release.

YOU CAN'T MASK THIS EXCITEMENT

The Mask animated series—based on the Dark Horse comic and Jim Carrey movie—will be back on CBS next season with 15 new episodes. Also, 30 more episodes will be produced for daily syndication starting this fall. Duane Capizzi will be the story editor for the CBS episodes, and Robert Skir, Marty Isenberg and Dean Stefan will be story editors for the syndicated shows.

"He's big fun," Skir said. "The Mask isn't a superhero. He's more like a force of nature."

BONING UP FOR ANIMATION

Jeff Smith is starting his own production company—which will probably be called Jeff Smith Productions or Jeff Smith Films—and its first pro-

ject will be an animated movie based on Smith's hit comic book *Bone*.

"I'll be independently producing it with my wife [Vijaya]," Smith told *Wizard*. "Step one is getting a really good screenplay. I've been out to Hollywood, and there seems enough interest for me to go out there and do it."

Smith will be working with Jim Kammerud, his former animation company partner. He said he hopes to complete the screenplay this spring.

SUPERMAN FLIES AGAIN

The Warner Bros. Network has put in a 65-episode order for the Superman animated series, which will start this fall. The first season will likely contain 13 episodes, the first three of which will be combined into a 90-minute movie to be shown in prime time. Batman animated series alumni Bruce Timm and Paul Dini are working on the program. Warner Bros. is also in the early stages of development of a Metal Men animated series, which would possibly be for ABC.

DEMATTEIS GOES HOLLYWOOD

J.M. DeMatteis' career has taken a Hollywood turn. DeMatteis, whose recent comics credits include *Amazing Spider-Man*, *Doctor Strange*, *Daredevil* and *Seekers: Into the Mystery*, is writing "Straight on Till Morning," a movie for Chris Columbus' 1492 Productions and 20th Century Fox.

"It's stuff I've been waiting for years to write, and it's finally happening. I'm very excited to be working with Chris Columbus," DeMatteis said.

The movie concerns a man who steps outside in the middle of one night in 1977 and sees a bright light. After blanking out for five seconds, he discovers 20 years have passed. His wife is dead, and his son is fully grown.

"It's not comic book-related," DeMatteis explained. "It has a fantasy premise, but it's told in human terms. It's not a cartoon; it has real people with real emotions."

DeMatteis is also writing an episode of novelist Caleb Carrs' new CBS series "The Osiris Chronicles." It's not the first time he's written for television; he did five episodes of the "Superboy" series, wrote for the new "Twilight Zone" series and has contributed to several animated shows.

In comics, DeMatteis will continue writing *Seekers* for DC's Vertigo line, and, after the cancellation of *Doctor Strange*, will write quarterly specials featuring the character.

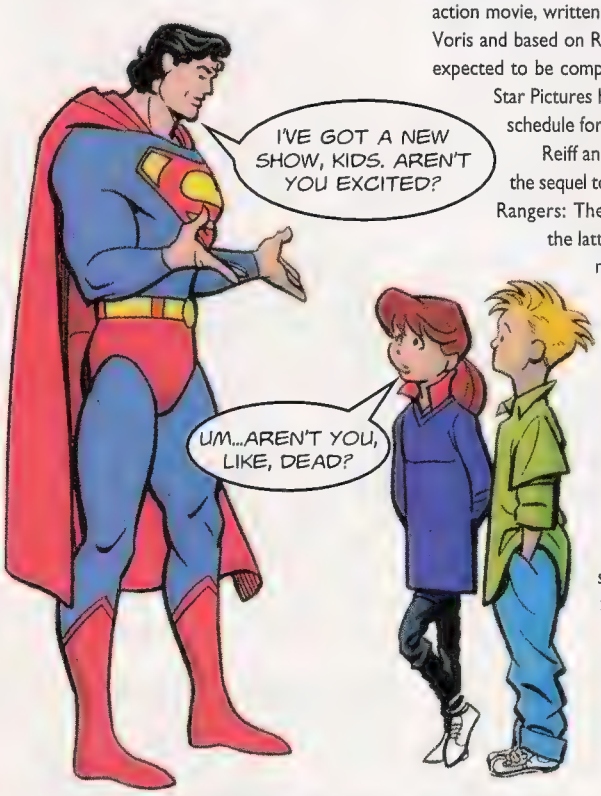
VISION OF PROPHET

The first draft of a script for the Prophet live-action movie, written by Ethan Reiff and Cyrus Voris and based on Rob Liefeld's characters, is expected to be completed by this month. TriStar Pictures has Prophet on its release schedule for the summer of 1997.

Reiff and Voris have also written the sequel to "Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers: The Movie" and "Remote," the latter of which is in development at Universal.

"Their take on [Prophet] is great," said Brian Witten, Liefeld's production partner, who is now also a director of development at New Line Cinema. "There's nothing like this in development. It's a big, big sci-fi/action movie and we want to get somebody like Arnold Schwarzenegger involved."

The Mark, another Liefeld property, is at Paramount with Tom Cruise's production company, Cruise-Wagner. Nick Sagan, the son of Carl Sagan, is working on the script.



MOST KIDS—AND ADULTS—WILL BE WATCHING SUPERMAN'S ANIMATED SERIES IN SEPTEMBER

PAUL McGANN: THE NEW DR. WHO

WHO'S NEXT

British actor Paul McGann will play the lead role in a new Doctor Who television-movie for the Fox Network. McGann, who becomes the eighth actor to play Doctor Who since the BBC series began on Nov. 23, 1963, is most familiar to American audiences for his roles in "Aliens" and "The Three Musketeers."

"Taking on such a key role really hasn't sunk in yet," McGann said. "It's just beginning to dawn on me what all this means. Sylvester McCoy [the most recent Doctor Who] is a friend, so he's told me everything I need to know. I loved Doctor Who as a kid. William Hartnell [the original Doctor] used to terrify me. My favorite villain was Yeti, but the Daleks never did it for me—they couldn't run up stairs."

"Doctor Who," which will likely air in May, has entered pre-production in Vancouver. The two-hour movie is being produced by MCA/Universal.

"The film will be loyal to the spirit of the past series, but I hope we'll find a fresh appeal, too," McGann said.

ALIEN RE-INVASION

Believe it or not, Ripley may be back. At press time, Sigourney Weaver was in negotiations to reprise her role for a fourth Alien movie. According to *Daily Variety*, Joss Whedon's script has Ripley returning from her demise at the end of "Alien^3" by being cloned. Recent buzz is that Winona Ryder ("Little Women") could be part of the cast, too. Danny Boyle will direct for 20th Century Fox, and the film could be attacking theaters by spring 1997.

HATE IN 'HYPE!'

"Hype!," a documentary about the grunge music phenomenon in Seattle, features a four-minute animated opening spotlighting characters from Peter Bagge's *Hate* comic book from Fantagraphics. "Hype!" director Doug Pray and producer Steve Helvey enlisted Bagge and Steve Loter, former director of "The Ren & Stimpy Show," to produce the sequence, which has Buddy and Stinky lamenting the "death" of the Seattle music scene. "Hype!" premiered in late January at the Sundance Festival. A Hate feature film and Girly Girl Saturday morning cartoon are both in development.

CASPER ON FOX

The new Casper animated series joined the Fox Saturday morning lineup on Feb. 24. It took over the 8:30 a.m. (ET) spot previously occupied by "Eek!stravaganza," which has taken the 3:30 p.m. weekday slot from "X-Men." Fox also announced that the Emmy award-winning "Where on Earth is Carmen Sandiego?" has been renewed for a fourth season.

VIDEO RELEASES

Disney has a trio of videos coming: last summer's hit "Pocahontas" on Feb. 28, "The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh" on March 27 and 1970's "The Aristocats" on April 24.

"Nothing But Shorts, The Unwashed Collection" is a home video from Sony Wonder and Nickelodeon Video of 22 shorts and commercial parodies that show up between episodes of "The Ren & Stimpy Show." The tape, which runs 50 minutes, became available on Feb. 20.

(LOTS OF) SHORT TAKES

"Batman Forever" will be in the movie history books forever: It finished 1995 as the top grossing movie in the United States with $183 million. "Apollo 13" was second with $172 million, and "Pocahontas" third with $141 million. "Batman Returns" in 1992 and "Batman" in 1989 were also their respective years' top grossers. Also, Seal's song "Kiss from a Rose" from the "Batman Forever" soundtrack was nominated for a Grammy Award for record of the year. Meanwhile, Uma Thurman, who earned raves for her role in "Pulp Fiction," has emerged as a leading candidate to play Poison Ivy in "Batman and Robin," the fourth Bat-flick, while Alicia Silverstone ("Clueless") is almost a sure bet for Batgirl....Disney's **The Mighty Ducks**, already a National Hockey League team and the focus of two live-action movies, will star in their own animated series this fall, both on a yet-undisclosed network and in syndication. The show features six superhero ducks from outer space. Disney also has a new Donald Duck series, "Duck Daze," which will air in syndication Tuesdays through Thursdays....Saban's **"VR Troopers"** has been renewed for another season in syndication next fall....**"Mars Attacks!,"** a live-action movie based on the Topps trading cards, was scheduled to begin production in early February. Tim Burton will direct, and produce along with Laurie Parker....Patrick McGoohan has wrapped a seven-figure deal with Polygram to write and produce a theatrical film version of **"The Prisoner."** McGoohan starred in the TV series and also wrote and directed several episodes....Kevin Smith, writer-director of "Mallrats," will write a movie based on **"The Six Million Dollar Man"** television series for Universal, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*. Richard Anderson, who played Oscar Goldman in the TV show (along with its spinoff "The Bionic Woman"), will be executive producer and may also act in the film....**"Skin Graft: Adventures of a Tattooed Man,"** based on the DC/Vertigo mini-series, is being developed into a movie by Oliver Stone's Ixtlan Productions. Angel Dean Lopez is writing the script. Stone and Janet Yang will produce, with Gene Kirkwood and Norman Stephens as executive producers....Paramount's animated **Beavis and Butt-Head** movie could be in theaters by the end of the year....Producer/director/writer Ivan Reitman has been linked to a live-action **Wonder Woman** film. W

Rob Allstetter has also been linked to a live-action Wonder Woman film.

CONGRATS, BATS: YOU HAD THE TOP GROSSING FILM OF 1995

Celebrity Profile

Jeremy Ratchford's a scream—which only makes sense, since he plays Banshee in February's Generation X television-movie. The Canadian actor has a sly sense of humor, the type that makes you think twice about the things he says.

But Ratchford also has a sense of reverence for Marvel's characters. He particularly likes Wolverine, and says playing Logan in the X-Men movie would be a dream role. And if there's more Generation X to hit television, Ratchford's all for getting back into his funky vest as Banshee.

Taking a break from Danger Room scenes in Vancouver, Ratchford plops down with his nearly completed crossword puzzle, lights up a cigarette and turns *Wizard*'s subjects into punchlines.

Banshee's powers: "He's got a sonic scream that can lull a sparrow to sleep or move a mountain. I want to do a 'Banshee: The Lounge Years' or 'Banshee Does Evita.' "

The accent: "He's written with Scottish inflections and he's kind of Scottish and Irish, which fits my background to a T. [*In accent*] I'm from the Murray clan of Ireland and the Ratchford clan of Scotland."

The Banshee/White Queen relationship: "There is so much sexual tension, it's just outrageous."

His nickname on the set: "Lucky Charms. [*Singing*] They're magically delicious!"

On just missing getting the voice of Wolverine in the X-Men cartoon: "Every time I've gone up for the X-Men since, they say, 'You sound too much like Wolverine.' And I say, 'I tried to prove that to you the first time.' "

Comic book movies: "It's a weird phenomenon. I was watching 'Batman,' and I was thinking we would get the costumes with the ribbed stomachs."

Marvel's traditionally flawed mutants: "Ninety-nine-point-nine percent of them are, except for Banshee. That's why he's got the toughest job. You know how hard it is to be perfect?"

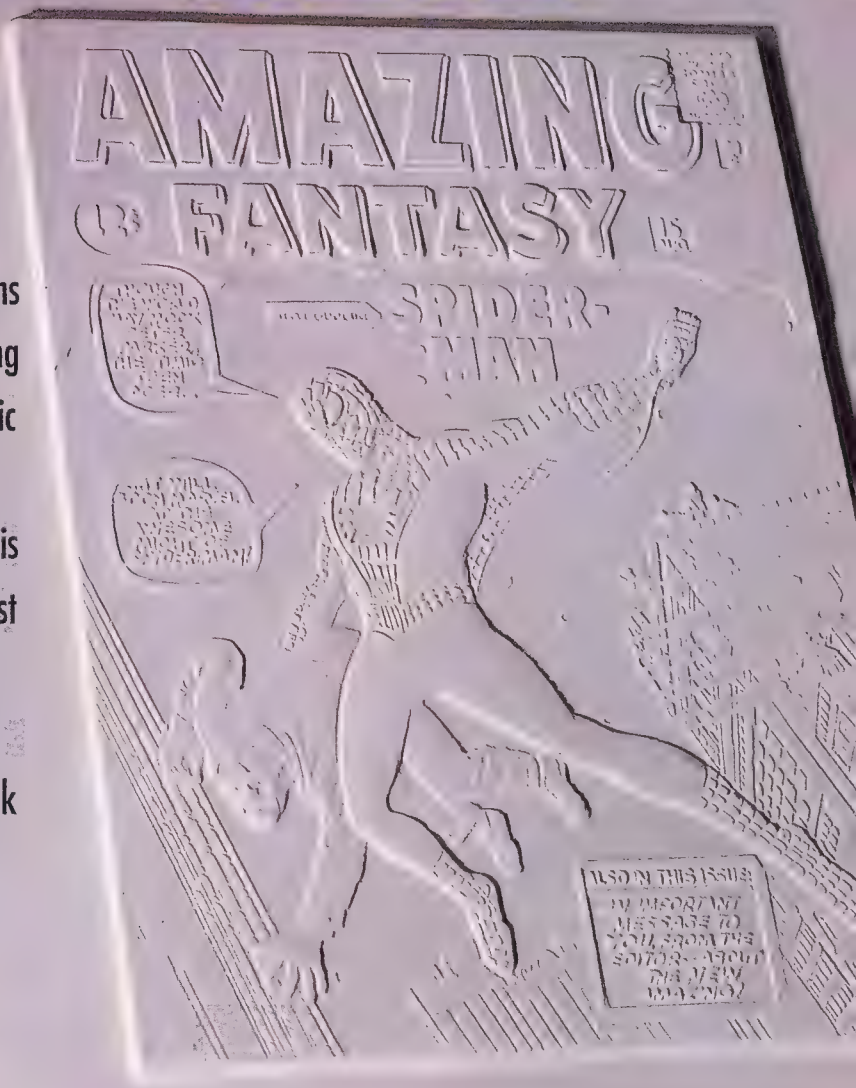
Dr. Who & Jeremy Ratchford photos courtesy of Fox-TV

A One-of-a-Kind Contest!

Mint-Card looks like!

After years of making high-quality sports products in precious metal, The Highland Mint has expanded its horizons into the comic world, launching a series of classic Marvel comic covers, called Mint-Cards. The company's very first offering is *Amazing Fantasy* #15, the first appearance of Spider-Man. And if you can put yourself in the Mint mood, you could walk off with a prize worthy of being held at the U.S. Mint. Or something like that.

THE GRAND PRIZE!



How to Play

Just get into the **mint** spirit by sending us something **mint.** It can be anything—a piece of [illegible] dinner **mint,** maybe some **mint** leaves. Send something in and you're as good as entered. [illegible] could win some…

MINT PRIZES

Grand Prize (1): One reader will receive the sucker on the [illegible] page—the one-of-a-kind original sculpt used to make The Highland Mint's initial Marvel cover offering of *Amazing Fantasy* #15. The sculpt will come with a letter of provenance (read: "certificate of authenticity," [illegible] Highland Mint stating that it is a unique item used in the actual production of the *Amazing Fantasy* [illegible]. A [illegible] kind copy of the *Amazing Fantasy* #15 cover? Now *that's* cool!

Second Prize (1): One reader will receive a silver *Amazing Fantasy* #15 replica (that's a whopping $235 retail value), and not just any one of that. It'll be the one numbered #15, which we think is keen as hell.

Third Prize (5): Five readers will receive a bronze *Amazing Fantasy* #15 Mint–Card (like the one on the top of [illegible] opposite page).

This contest is sponsored by The Highland Mint. Call 1-800-544-6135 for a dealer near you. Operators are standing by!

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your minty thing, put it in an envelope and send it to: Highland Mint Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is April 30, 1996.

The Legalese

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The Highland Mint Contest!

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 1996!

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach something mint?

a look at some cool stuff with an alternative twist

Seriously Funny

The unconventional stories of *Atomic City Tales* and the bold cartooning of *Land of Nod* are a welcome change from super-serious comics

Jay Stephens just wants to get a little sleep; he's overworked and can't find enough time for all of his upcoming projects. He's set to launch two new series this year: *Atomic City Tales*, a revamping of his goofy superhero comic from 1994, and *Land of Nod*, a no-holds-barred funny animal comic. Not only that, but he's busy finishing several collaborations with *THB* creator Paul Pope, and he may even try his hand at self-publishing a collection of his weekly "Oddville" comic strip. "This is going to be a pretty tiring year for me," Stephens acknowledges. "I wish I didn't have to sleep, but I think I'm going to go to sleep for a year in 1997."

Stephens doesn't get his work done just by avoiding sleep; he maintains a very rigorous schedule. "I have to work like a regular person. I have to sit down every day and do a bit of work," he explains. "It's hard being your own boss, but I'm pretty hard on myself. I keep threatening to fire myself, and it gets me in line. Some days I call in sick, though."

Not many creators can handle two different series at the same time, but it all comes naturally to Stephens. His first comic, *Sin* (and the follow-up series *Sin Comics*), by Tragedy Strikes Press in 1992, was a smorgasbord of different comics. A typical issue of *Sin* might start with a short gag strip or a fake ad, and then quickly jump to the adventures of anthropomorphic creatures like Merv and Dave or a goofy supervillain group like the Sinister Horde.

Stephens' two new series separate the parts of his earlier work into different comics. "I'm interested in a lot of different styles of storytelling and cartooning," Stephens explains. "I used to think mixing it up in one comic like *Sin* was cool, but I wasn't getting enough room to play with each of those techniques. Now I have two different comic books, each with quite different styles. If you know my work, you can tell it's all by the same guy, but both comics really cover a lot of ground for me. Maybe I'm too ambitious, but I think I can do it."

Aside from the different subject matter of *Land of Nod* and *Atomic City Tales*, Stephens' two new series provide him with new challenges, and the reader with very entertaining stories. Every issue of *Land of Nod* will feature a complete story focusing on one character from a memorable cast, including Space Ape Number Eight, Captain Rightful, Tutenstein the Mummy Boy, and Irwin. On the other hand, *Atomic City Tales* will have multi-issue stories with a cast made up of inspired superheroes like Big Bang and the Quirk, and supervillains like Doc Phantom and Z-Girl. *Atomic City Tales* originally appeared as a quarterly series in 1994 with self-contained stories, which prevented Stephens from leaving the readers hanging at the end of an issue because of the long gap between issues. But the new bimonthly series will delight readers with Stephens' trademark off-center characters in longer, continual stories.

Atomic City Tales is also unique because of a special cast member: Mild-mannered Jay Stephens is a character in his own comic. "It feels weird, but a lot of people thought that it was an interesting angle to have the cartoonist appearing in a superhero comic," Stephens says. "I get kidnapped by Doc Phantom in the first issue. He's holding a Crook of the Year party for himself, and he's pretty proud of it. All these crazy supervillains are there, and they're not all that happy that he keeps winning every year. I get invited to draw some sketches of everybody and put them in the comic."

The unconventional stories of *Atomic*

Cover art from *Land of Nod* #1

by tom palmer, jr.

Quirk from *Atomic City Tales*

City Tales and the bold cartooning of *Land of Nod* are a welcome relief in an industry flooded with super-serious comics. Stephens' comics are just plain fun to read and look at; he has an unmatched spontaneity and an evocative inking style. Perhaps Stephens' work is so fresh because of his early experiences with comic books. "Unlike a lot of people in comics, I never did draw comics when I was a kid for myself," he claims. "Actually, I was religiously devoted to reading comics, to the point where it was almost blasphemy to think about drawing them myself."

Recently, Stephens has branched out by working with Paul Pope, creator of *THB*, on a number of jam stories. Collaborations are almost unheard of among "alternative" cartoonists, yet Stephens and Pope seem to work well together. "We connected together really well because we're both coming from the same place idea-wise, and yet our work is very different," Stephens notes. "Paul has a very gestural, organic, loose style, a very poetic style of writing, and a natural grasp of architecture and anatomy. Stuff I haven't mastered. My work is very clean, graphic and iconic. The collaboration was a weird Reese's Peanut Butter Cup-type thing."

The pair penciled and inked each other's work on "Supergag"—a humorous tale of a boxing match between Jay Stephens' characters and Paul Pope's, as well as the two creators themselves—which appeared in Pope's magazine *Buzz Buzz #1*, and they are currently working on other projects together. Stephens has found his work with Pope to be rewarding in many ways. "It's interesting how someone else interprets your pencil line. I like it. You get these mixed feelings when it comes out, it doesn't look like how you would do it, but it's somehow better. It's really neat. This is the way collaborations should work in comics."

With all of these projects set to come out in the next few months, it's going to be hard to not notice Jay Stephens. Understandably, Stephens is very excited about the possibilities that will be open for him. "The future is uncertain for me, but very bright. I'll take it as it comes." W

When no one is looking, the freelance writer known as Tom Palmer jr. likes to dress in lederhosen *and get down to some good polka music.*

FYI

The first issue of the quarterly *Land of Nod* will be out in March, and the new bimonthly *Atomic City Tales* will begin in early May. Check your local comic store for both of these series, or write to Black Eye Productions (5135 Parc Ave. #5, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2V 4G3) for information on *Land of Nod*. For the scoop on *Atomic City Tales*, contact Kitchen Sink Press at 320 Riverside Drive, Northampton, MA 01060 or call 1-800-365-SINK. Also look for *THB #7*, *Buzz Buzz #1*—both of which should be on sale now—and a special project called "Wingtip Caper" (the lead story in the *THB—B* paperback, due in June), all of which present Jay Stephens' collaborations with Paul Pope from Horse Press.

Jay Stephens' Recommended Reading

"This is probably too many for you to put in that little box! I really like Charles Burns' new *Black Hole* series. I didn't know what to expect. I've been a big fan of his for a long time, but I got a real big kick out of that. I'm really enchanted and eager to see where he's going with it next. *TUG & buster* is cool; very funny. Tom Hart's *New Hat* was great. Those are my big faves right now. Then there's the consistently good comics like *Love & Rockets, Jim, Acme Novelty Library, THB, Eightball, Rubber Blanket, Palooka-ville* and *Madman Comics.*"

Recommended Reading

Patty Cake Cartoonist Scott Roberts has been doodling Patty Cake since he was 9 years old, and his experience with the character shows. Patty Cake is a young girl who always seems to get into trouble, and every issue of *Patty Cake* is full of her comical adventures with her parents and her friends Irving and José. Roberts' cartooning is delightful; he's able to perfectly capture the naïve playfulness and harmless intensity of a child's perspective. (Wow! I got through that without comparing Scott Roberts to Peter Bagge!) The seventh issue of *Patty Cake* is out in February, and you can write to Scott at Permanent Press, PO Box 546, Monsey, NY 10952 for more information.

Ghost Ship March looks like it'll be a big month for Xeric award-winning cartoonist Jon Lewis. For starters, there's *The Memoirs of Lenny the Frog*, a big paperback collection of his endearing *True Swamp* series featuring Lenny the Frog and his encounters with other swamp creatures, both real and imagined. Lewis has also prepared the first issue of *Ghost Ship*. This brand-new series features the further adventures of the cast of *True Swamp*, as well as seafaring tales with the crew of the Free Ship Cassowary. Lewis (along with others like David Lasky, Tom Hart, Megan Kelso and Jason Lutes) is part of a new generation of young cartoonists who are willing to take chances and expand comics as a medium of expression. For more information on all things Lewis, contact Slave Labor Graphics at 979 S. Bascom Ave, San Jose, CA 95128 or call 1-800-866-8929.

scene

A guide to Japanese comics and animation.

by Carl Gustav Horn

manga rides a dark horse

Criminals, beware! The Tank Police are here. Check out *Dominion: Conflict-1—No More Noise* this March.

A familiar face kicks off Dark Horse's "Manga Month" in March. The latest round comes from perhaps the best known and most influential manga writer/artist in the United States: Masamune Shirow, who bowled fans over with last year's *Ghost in the Shell* mini-series that kicked off last year's "Manga Month."

His newest project to be released in America is *Dominion: Conflict-1—No More Noise*, a six-issue mini-series, featuring beautifully painted Shirow covers. *No More Noise* continues the popular *Dominion* saga with a story of Leona's rise through the *lethally* funny office politics of the Tank Police, as former public enemies (and fan favorites) the Puma Sisters are deputized onto the force! *Dominion*, much like *Judge Dredd*, is a black-comedy future police story, where the Japanese cop on the beat, Leona, rides a Gatling gun-Equipped mini-tank. (Hey, tanks were part of a compromise with the mayor; the police chief wanted nuclear weapons!)

Peet Janes, editor at Dark Horse, has a lot of enthusiasm for Shirow's work. "He's a gold star on our record, a reputation-booster. We've had a relationship with him the entire time we've been publishing manga." Janes points out that Dark Horse nevertheless deals with the mysterious Shirow indirectly through San Francisco's Studio Proteus, the workshop which has adapted all of Dark Horse's manga into English.

Shirow (whose name is a pseudonym) is a former high school art teacher who lives like a recluse in Kobe, Japan, and never attends conventions. Though few of his fans would recognize his face, Shirow has millions (of fans, not faces!) in Japan and a growing legion in America, entranced with his depictions of girls, mechanical mastery, erudite plots and utter mastery of screentones in his artwork.

One of the most talked about anime releases of 1996, Manga Entertainment's "Ghost in the Shell," is based on Shirow's manga of the same name, now finally available as a graphic novel through Dark Horse.

Dark Horse is also hoping to do something interesting in the future with Shirow's work. "One of our dream projects to do with Shirow," says Janes, "is one that's been gathering dust—a sourcebook for Shirow's sci-fi world in *Neuro Hard*, for other artists and writers, including American ones, to do stories in. I'd love to see Chris Claremont, Frank Miller and Adam Warren go to town on that."

Back in the U.S., March is a manga party for Dark Horse, but manga still goes on the morning after. In April, Dark Horse will be bringing out *Spirit of Wonder*, the comic by Kenji Tsurata which the new anime release of the same name from AnimEigo is based upon.

Spirit of Wonder, as the name might imply, is a lighthearted romance set in a rural Victorian England of the kind that seems to exist only in Japanese sci-fi. Dotty professors build giant, vacuum tube-filled gadgets for lunar travel and their young assistants are smitten with the Chinese girl who runs the local pub. Tsurata is known for the blunted sexiness of his character designs and offbeat sense of whimsy. Like *Gunsmith Cats'* Kenichi Sonoda, he's another crony of the notorious super-fan anime and software studio Gainax (makers of the TV show "Neon Genesis Evangelion," as mentioned in last month's "Manga Scene.").

Look ahead to June for Dark Horse to bring back that violent samurai action spirit to the U.S.—which hasn't been seen in the U.S. since *Lone Wolf and Cub* from First

Spirit of Wonder #1

Comics came out in 1987—with Hiroaki Samura's *Blade of the Immortal*, first published in Japan in 1993 under the title *Mugen no Junin* ("The Eternal Dweller"). The "immortal" is a wandering ronin, condemned to wander and slay a thousand evil-doers before his soul can be at rest. As might be imagined, current Dark Horse manga editor Dave Chipps describes its mood as "pretty dark, with a grim feeling to it. Yet the pencil work portraying the action is incredibly kinetic."

Coming up this summer is the return of Johji Manabe (*Outlanders*, *Caravan Kidd*), with *Hellsbane*, a sort of story that Manabe truly seems to enjoy: a sword-swinging, red-haired sorceress fighting demons in a hellish landscape. Under consideration is a second series of *Gunsmith Cats*, a title which Chipps says "started out slow, but word got around." With the first of three volumes of the "Gunsmith Cats" anime being released on February 27 from Houston's A.D. Vision, it's hoped that interest in this title will indeed be sufficient for Dark Horse to give it a sequel series. Dates for the other two volumes have yet to be announced.

Be sure to check out both the new stories and new talent from the black charger of the industry, Portland's finest! As Chipps puts it, "A black-and-white manga such as *Dominion* or *Gunsmith Cats* is, creatively, light-years ahead of the average American color comic. Creators such as Kenichi Sonoda and Masamune Shirow use storytelling dynamics and a range of emotional expression most American comics creators just can't touch. Manga remains an undiscovered treasure for many U.S. readers, yet some of today's hottest creators here are heavily influenced by manga. Guess what, people? The manga books are the best comics on the market!" W

Carl Horn, who wrote "American Manga" on page 52, can fit an entire soccer ball in his mouth.

AMERICAN INVASION

Oddly enough, manga is a two-way street for Dark Horse. The company's been introducing American comics to Japan through the popular quarterly anthology *Super Comic Maker*, in which Japanese versions of such titles as *The Mask*, *Flaming Carrot* and *Predator* have appeared.

"It's been pretty well received by the Japanese audience," says Dark Horse editor Peet Janes. "Really, they're eager to get their hands on American comic culture."

These days, Dark Horse's *Star Wars* comics are even advertised in the flagship Japanese anime magazine, *Newtype*. And fans wouldn't even have to go to a galaxy far, far away to get their hands on them.

picks of the month

video:

Kishin Corps

(Pioneer LDCA, dubbed VHS/subtitled VHS/bilingual LD (CC); 60 mins., $24.98/$29.98/$39.98, 4 volumes)

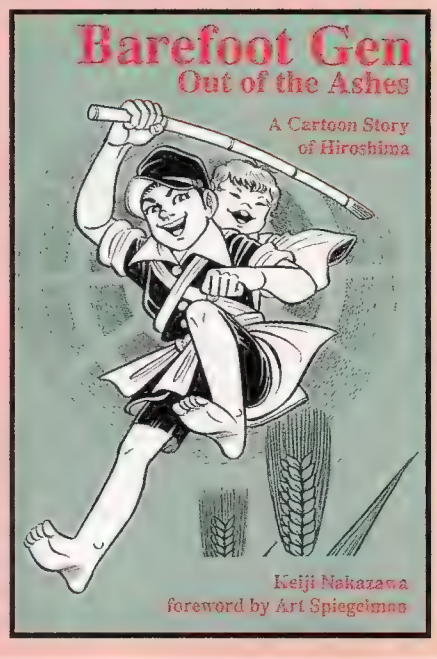
Like "Giant Robo," "Kishin Corps" gives the feeling of stylized characters and riveted, industrial-looking robot behemoths from a cool, retro-'60s anime TV show—updated with the techniques of the 1990s. But whereas "Giant Robo" seemed to be set in an alternate future, "Kishin" is set in an alternate past: one that imagines what might have happened had aliens invaded Earth in the midst of World War II! The Hitler/Stalin pact was *nothing* compared to a scenario where the Nazis and Imperial Japan are trying to exploit the alien robots' technology for world conquest, and the international brigade of the Kishin Corps must fight both the Axis and the aliens at the same time! Kishin is a stylish, distinctively different looking adventure story that—pardon the phrase—is for the whole family. No nudity or graphic violence, but a whole lot of fun.

manga:

Barefoot Gen: Out of the Ashes

(New Society Publishers, 4527 Springfield Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143, $12.95, 288 pages, four volumes)

Unlike "horror" or "war" manga artists who grew up in today's rich and peaceful Japan, Keiji Nakazawa isn't jerking your chain with his comics. He actually *lived* through Hiroshima as a six-year-old boy, and all the hell that followed, a story frankly and brutally portrayed in *Barefoot Gen*. Yet, Nakazawa's purpose is to explain people's *lives*, not just their deaths, and the *Gen* saga shows us the origins of the war that led to the bomb—how people can be transformed into lunatics capable of terrible things, simply by invoking the name of the Emperor, or the Great Japanese Empire, and assuming that their cause is just. "Ashes" is the latest volume of *Gen*. It and the three previous ones, "A Cartoon Story of Hiroshima," "The Day After," and "Life After the Bomb," can be found in your local comic store or ordered directly from the publisher. Include $2.50 (shipping and handling) for the first copy, 75 cents for each additional copy.



DRAWING BOARD

Who needs the pros? This is the show for **Wizard Readers' Art**

The four hip folks whose artwork scored an honorable mention this month will each receive a *Factor X* #1 signed by John Francis Moore and a *The Maxx* #2 signed by William Messner-Loebs. Each of the three kickin' runners-up will receive a *Wolverine* #90 signed by Larry Hama, an *Uncanny X-Men* #310 signed by John Romita Jr. and a *Spider-Man 2099* #37 signed by Howard Chaykin. Davy Apis, the rad artist of this month's winning entry, will receive all that rockin' stuff, plus the original art by Mike Deodato Jr. from the *Pitt* Intrepid card set (*muchas gracias*, Intrepid)! Congrats, everyone!

GRAND PRIZE

LADY DEATH **Davy Apis** Fayetteville, NC

THE ARTIST

DAVY APIS

THE BOOTY

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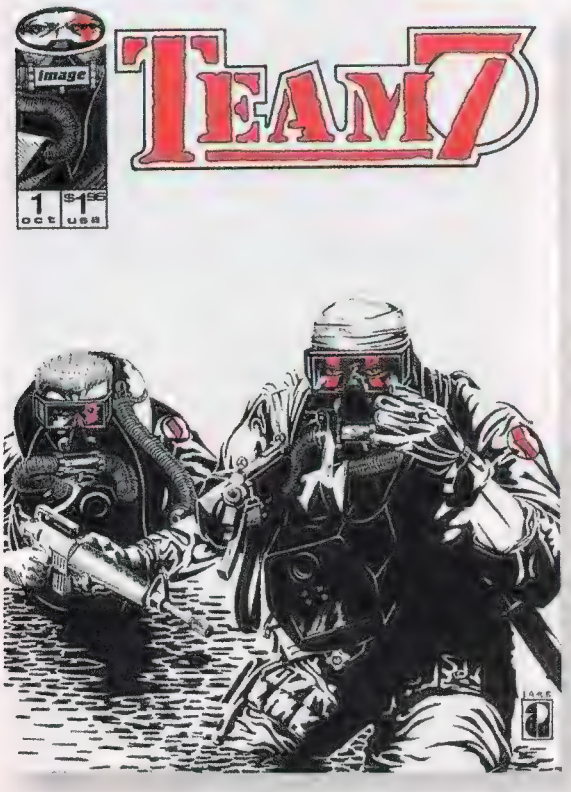
INTREPID

RUNNERS-UP

PRIME CITY Ron Riley Prince Albert, Sask., Canada

TEAM 7 Andrew Phillips New South Wales, Australia



THE TICK VS. SPAWN Teddy Whittenbarger & J. Wade Webb
Chattanooga, TN

HONORABLE MENTIONS

BOBBY'S SPIDER-WORLD
Terri Nickelson-Williams
St. Helens, OR

BATMAN UNPLUGGED
Alfredo Escarcega
Phoenix, AZ

HARDWARE
Basheer Abdulmusawwir
Hampton, VA

SUNFIRE
Michael Oscar
London, England

Want your art to appear on one of these three pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your Drawing Board entries to:

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

Entries can be e-mailed to WizardTGTC@aol.com (Please use an EPS or TIFF format @ 300 dpi.). And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. All entries are nonreturnable and become the property of Wizard Press. Employees of Wizard Press are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? Good luck!

you've got a horde of crazed villains chasing you...
...and you're late for school!

what do you do?
what do you do?

- dan FRAGA
- eric STEPHENSON
- marlo ALQUIZA

homework, girlfriends, who has the time?

KID SUPREME

gets real in MARCH

FRAGA! & MARLO

EXTREME STUDIOS™

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BY JOYCE M. STEEL

CARDS GO ALTERNATIVE

In March, Dynamic Entertainment unleashes its *Creators' Alternate Universe* series, a 90-carder featuring all original art from a slew of hot independent publishers like Colleen Doran (*A Distant Soil*), Teri S. Wood (*Wandering Star*) and Drew Hayes (*Poison Elves*) leading a pack of 10 creators.

A mere $1.50 gets you an eight-card pack featuring those three artists plus Terry Moore (*Strangers in Paradise*), B.C. Boyer (*Hilly Rose*), Batton Lash (*Wolf and Byrd*), David Mack (*Kabuki*), James Owens (*Starchild*), Paul Pope (*THB*) and a newcomer named Mark Crilley with his creation, *Akiko*. Each artist has contributed between seven and 10 cards to the set, which includes 87 art cards and three checklist cards.

As for the chase cards, collectors can look for a parallel set of autographed cards randomly inserted in the series with the artists signing 100 of each of the cards they contributed.

THE BROTHERS HILDEBRANDT

Greg and Tim Hildebrandt are revisiting Star Wars for the first time in 20 years, with a Topps card series scheduled for summer release. Though details are sketchy, the set'll feature 100 original paintings by the Hildebrandts, and will be based upon a new book, *Shadows of the Empire*, which covers the goings-on of the Imperials and the Rebels during the time between "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Return of the Jedi."

And for Hildebrandt fans who can't wait till summer, Comic Images will release its *Best of the Hildebrandts* all-chromium series in March. The 90-card collection pairs 80 paintings from the brothers' four previous series with nine new pieces of art featuring Covenant, a character they created for a guest appearance in Event Comics' *Ash* #5. Expect to pay about $2.29 for each seven-card pack. Chase cards include six MagnaChromeTM chase cards, a three-card subset and one of the 500 Greg and Tim Autographed Cards.

TOPPS

Topps gives us Barb Wire cards this February, based largely on Propaganda Films' action adventure flick. But for comics fans, the real treat of this series comes in the form of a nine-card subset of covers from the Dark Horse comic (featuring art by the likes of Dave Dorman and Matt Haley), along with a nine-card gallery subset of new comic art from Jim Balent, Walt Simonson and Joseph Michael Linsner. (72 card series, 9 cards per pack, $1.50 suggested retail.)

FLEER/SKYBOX

Fleer announced the formation of a new "hobby trade division." If it works like they say it will, it'll mean that folks who've faithfully frequented hobby shops for their collectibles—and the diehards running those hobby shops—will finally catch a break.

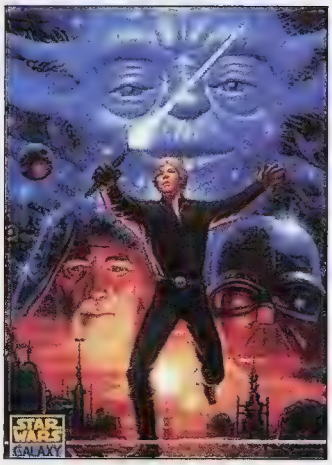
In the cards for hobby participants, promises Fleer's Ted Taylor, are these goodies: a buncha hobby-only series and chase cards, smaller boxes (like 18 packs to a box), and fewer cards in packs at about a third the cost.

THE DISH FOR NEXT ISH:

1996 marks the 30th year since the maiden voyage of the Starship Enterprise, and SkyBox is celebrating big time. We'll let Trek fans in on the products and promotions to watch for. Plus, Comic Images goes Supreme. W

Joyce M. Steel is a comics 'n' cards freelance writer living in Jersey. She's teaching her cat to play collectible card games and type Wizard *"Card Market" columns.*

***Strangers in Paradise* is part of the *Creator's Alternate Universe* set from Dynamic Entertainment.**



"Now, where the heck did I park the speeder?" The Hildebrandts return to Star Wars this summer.

InQuest presents HIT THE DECK

The latest in collectible card game news

• In a move that'll shake up *Magic* players across the country, two of the game's more popular cards have been put on the banned/restricted list. No need to worry about those ridiculously annoying **Black Vises**—they've been restricted to one per deck. As for the ultra-powerful **Mind Twist**—bye-bye, it's banned.

• Speaking of first-turn kills, We're sure that's what the big guns at this year's ***Magic* Pro Tour** will be gunning for.

With the first event slated for February 16-17 in New York, and four other cross-country events to follow, the tournaments will have two separate divisions—seniors (ages 18 and up) consisting of 256 players, and juniors (18 and younger) consisting of 128 players. Sixteen prizes will be awarded, including a $12,000 senior Grand Prize (juniors will receive scholarships equal to the seniors' prizes).

• New battlesites! New characters! More *Gen*[13]! That's what you can expect from ***Conflict!***, the first expansion set from the *WildStorms* CCG. Also look for the *WildStorms* Unlimited Edition right around the corner.

• What else is new, you ask? Lots. You've got ***Monsters & Amazons***, supplemental dice for TSR's ever-popular *Dragon Dice* collectible dice game (CDG?). ***Knights of the Isles***, the first expansion for the Arthurian-themed *Quest for the Grail*, with more renowned knights like Sirs Agravaine, Gawain and Gareth. Plus, on the brand-new CCG front comes Mayfair Games' ***Fantasy Adventures***, a monster vs. hero, treasure and trap, quick-combat sort of game. ■ *Michael Searle*

Michael Searle is the editor of Wizard*'s sister mag* InQuest, *the all-around grooviest guide to collectible card games.*

Playmates Presents...

The Wild about WildC.A.T.s Contest

Hey! There's a brand-spankin' new WildC.A.T.s video game cartridge out and 'round these parts, that's plenty cause for celebration! So we're a-gonna put on our party hats and dance a jig while we give you the opportunity to win it, and maybe even some toys too!

Just cut out that coupon below, write your name and address and other important information on it and mail it to us. If we pick your name, you're a winner! It's that easy!

Here's what you could get:

Grand Prize (1):

One lucky person gets a one-of-a-kind set of 14 Playmates WildC.A.T.s action figures, all autographed by WildC.A.T.s creator Jim Lee! And that's not all—you'll get the *WildC.A.T.s* video game cartridge too.

Second Prize (10):

Another 10 lucky people each get one of those funkified *WildC.A.T.s* video game cartridges.

Third Prize (10):

Ten more will each get a WildC.A.T.s action figure! Hoo-rah!

This month's contest is sponsored by Playmates Interactive Entertainment, Playmates Toys and WildStorm Productions. We thank them all.

The Wild Legalese

No purchase necessary. To enter, complete and mail the entry form or send a (standard sized postcard or the contest form) containing your name, address, phone number and age to: Wild About WildC.A.T.s Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No purchase or payment of any money is necessary to enter. One entry per household. All entries must be handwritten. Mechanically reproduced entries will not be accepted. Entries must be received by April 30, 1996. All entries become exclusive property of the Sponsors and will not be acknowledged or returned. Sponsors assume no responsibility for lost, mutilated, late, illegible, incomplete, postage-due, or misdirected entries. Illegible entries and entries not satisfying all rules will be automatically disqualified. Submission of entry gives Playmates Interactive Entertainment Inc. the right to modify publish and/or use the entry in any way without consideration or payment to contestant. Only one prize per family, organization or household. Prizes: 1 Grand Prize: Grand Prize winner will receive one set of 14 WildC.A.T.s action figures signed by Jim Lee and one WildC.A.T.s cartridge Winners will be determined by random drawing from all valid entries by Wizard Press whose decisions are final. Drawing to be held on or about May 15,1996. All prizes will be awarded. At the option of Sponsors an alternative prize shall be awarded should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. Odds of Winning: The odds of winning will be determined by number of valid entries received. Eligibility: Sweepstakes open to residents of United States and Canada. Void in Quebec. Non-compliance with the time parameter contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Winners or their legal guardians must sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within 30 days of receipt of notification of winning status or forfeit prize. By acceptance of prize, winner(s) agrees to the use of their names and/or likeness for purpose of advertising, trade or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Employees of Playmates Interactive Entertainment Inc. and their respective subsidiaries, affiliates, advertising and promotional agencies and their immediate families are not eligible. Neither Playmates Interactive Entertainment Inc. or their respective subsidiaries, affiliates, advertising and companies are responsible for any damages, taxes, or expenses that consumers might incur as a result of this contest or receipt of prize. Winners accepting prizes agree that all prizes are awarded on the condition that Playmates Interactive Entertainment Inc. and their agents, representatives and employees will have no liability for any injuries, losses, or damages of any kind resulting from acceptance, possession, or use of the prizes. Winners acknowledge that said parties have neither made nor are in any manner responsible or liable for any warranty, representation, or guarantee express or implied, in fact or in law, relative to any prize, including but not limited to its quality, mechanical condition or fitness. **Winners List:** For a list of winners, send a stamped, self addressed envelope to WildC.A.T.s Winners List, Wizard Press, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920. **Restrictions:** Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All federal, state and local regulations apply. **Sponsor:** Contest sponsored by Playmates Interactive Entertainment Inc. and Playmates Toys. Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.s are ™ & © AEGIS Entertainment, Inc. D/B/A WildStorm Productions 1994. All rights reserved. Series © 1994 Nelvana Ltd. Playmates Interactive Entertainment, Inc. Authorized User.

Jim Lee's WildC.A.T.s are ™ & © AEGIS Entertainment, Inc. D/B/A WildStorm Productions 1994. All rights reserved. Series © 1994 Nelvana Ltd. Playmates Interactive Entertainment, Inc. Authorized User

Fill this out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Wild about WildC.A.T.s Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is April 30, 1996.

The Wild about WildC.A.T.s Contest

DEADLINE IS APRIL 30, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____ Cheddar or Swiss?

THE TOY CHEST

'96 MARVEL TOYS REVEALED

Toy Biz has already announced that the Spring '96 releases for its Spider-Man line would include Carnage Unleashed, Man-Spider, Octo Spider-Man, Tombstone and Web Cannon Spider-Man. But Toy Biz has now revealed its plans for the Spring '96 line-ups for Fantastic Four, Ghost Rider, Iron Man and X-Men 2099.

FANTASTIC FOUR

The new Fantastic Four series will include Johnny Storm, Medusa, Pyscho Man (Psycho Man? What are they thinking?), Thing and the Wizard. All five figures come with a detachable base. Perhaps the most intriguing figure of the bunch is Johnny Storm. As you can see below, Johnny is just about to fully burst into flames—small yellow peaks of flame are situated on his legs and left arm. It's pretty hard to make flames look realistic, but we'll reserve judgment until the actual figure's released.

GHOST RIDER

The Ghost Rider comic may not be nearly as hot as it used to be, but there's plenty o' toys planned for this year. When spring comes around, be on the lookout for Armor Blaze, Exploding Ghost Rider, Original Ghost Rider, Outcast and Zarathos. If you recall, Zarathos was originally supposed to be in the first series but ended up as a last-minute scratch. Hey, press a button on the Exploding Ghost Rider's back and watch body parts fly everywhere. Fun for the whole family!

And what would a Ghost Rider line be without some cool motorcycles? (Pretty boring, that's what!) There are already two types of rider/cycle assortments currently available. In Ghost Rider Flamin' Stunt Cycle packaging, collectors can find Blaze mounted on his Dark Cycle, Ghost Rider and his "Ghost Fire" Cycle, and Vengeance with his Steel Skeleton Cycle. All stunt cycles with their non-removable riders are equipped with rip cord action and retail around $9-$10.

The Ghost Rider Spirits of Vengeance packaging includes a 5-inch figure of Blaze, Ghost Rider or Vengeance with their respective motorcycles that launch some form of projectile. The three figures are exclusively decorated for "Spirits of Vengeance." Suggested retail is in the $15-$18 range.

L to r: The Wizard, Johnny Storm, Thing, Psycho Man, Medusa

L to r: Zarathos, Exploding Ghost Rider, Outcast, Original Ghost Rider, Armor Blaze

L to r: Crimson Dynamo, Subterranean Iron Man, Samurai Iron Man, Inferno Iron Man, War Machine

L to r: Halloween Jack, Junkpile, Shadow Dancer, La Lunatica, Breakdown and Dominic

IRON MAN

The second Iron Man series will feature Crimson Dynamo (finally!), Inferno Iron Man, Samurai Iron Man, Subterranean Iron Man and War Machine. Since the inception of the Iron Man line, Toy Biz has used an exclusive process known as vacuum metalization to give his armor's accessories a high-resin sheen. Hey, a shiny Iron Man is a happy Iron Man!

X-MEN 2099

No, there aren't 2,099 X-Men figures out there yet (even though it seems like it), but there will definitely be more toys based on your favorite futuristic mutants. The Spring '96 line-up for X-Men 2099 will consist of Breakdown and Dominic, Halloween

BY **DAN ALBAUGH**

Jack, Junkpile, La Lunática and Shadow Dancer. La Lunática and Controller #13 were initially scheduled as first-assortment releases but were supposedly put on hiatus for re-tooling. Look for Controller #13 in the third series.

FIVE VOLUMES OF GREAT INFO

Toy Biz is sure to get a nice boost with Marvel Comics' release of *The Ultimate Marvel Superhero Toy Collector Guide*. The first four 64-page volumes were released in late 1995 and provide complete coverage for all of the Mattel, Mego and Toy Biz action figure releases from the 1970s through mid-1994. The fifth volume is slated for release in early 1996. All of the volumes, which retail for $4.95 each, come in comic size format with glossy pages and a card- stock cover. The volumes also cover the numerous prototypes and figures that were never actually issued. If you're a serious action figure collector or a novice who wants to become educated quickly, these books are a must.

TREK TRUTHS

Here's the lowdown on what Playmates has in store for its Star Trek lines in the first half of 1996. Commander Chakotay, Ensign Harry Kim, Kes and Lieutenant Tom Paris were recently issued to round out the first series of the Star Trek: Voyager toy line. Six new figures are slated for a late spring release—Chakotay as a Maquis, Kazon, Lt. Carey, Lt. Seska, Lt. Torres as a Klingon, and Viidian.

In the Classic Star Trek line, look for Janice Rand and Nurse Chapel to hit store shelves soon. Captain Pike, the U.S.S. Enterprise's first skipper, will be released in April. (Hey, we got one of our wishes answered already! See the "Wish List" part of last month's "Toy Chest.") And in late summer, Capt. Kirk in casual attire should be available.

Collectors will have to wait until May for Deep Space Nine's newest addition, Worf in a DS9 outfit. Expect an April release for a Vash figure. (Cool! Then you can send her and your Picard figure off on exciting archaeological digs, if you know what we mean.) In the 9-inch Collector Edition line, Miles O'Brien in a DS9 outfit is scheduled for late summer.

And why are the price guide listings for Star Trek: The Next Generation figures of Data (7th Season/Redemption) and Thomas Riker (7th Season) so high? That seems to be a very popular question as of late.

The Data Redemption figure was originally a J.C. Penney exclusive and was produced in limited quantities. In recent months, the figure was available in small quantities at various discount toy outlets. These figures were gobbled up quickly and, because the supply has not met the demand, the Data Redemption has a secondary market price of $75 to $125. And in case you're wondering, Redemption refers to an episode from the seventh season of "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

As for the Thomas Riker figure, dealers have indicated finding one per 7-8 cases. The price range for the Riker is incredible, with dealers reporting sales within the past month as low as $60 and as high as $225. Collectors searching for the figure in hobby trade publications have come up empty. Keep in mind that retailers in the secondary market most likely have a waiting list of prospective buyers for the Riker, meaning there is little need to advertise nationally.

A FINAL WORD

Hey, manufacturers, if you're not currently making this column aware of your new action figure releases, please feel free to do so. Send new releases, photos, product samples and whatever else you've got to: Toy Chest, Attn: Dan Albaugh, P.O. Box 458, Waterford, PA 16441.

Action figure collectors are also more than welcome to provide input for this humble column. If you've got any interesting tidbits (new variants, show reports, etc.) that might make this column all the more pleasurable to read, send them to me at the address in the preceding paragraph or fax them to me at (814) 796-3936. Thanks! W

Dan Albaugh can eat his own body weight in Froot Loops! It's scary but true.

WISH LIST

THE 10 ACTION FIGURES THAT WIZARD WANTS TO SEE MADE

(AND SOON)

1) Havok (X-Men)—Holding at the number one slot this month is the original-costume Havok! (Y'know, skin-tight black suit with white onion rings on his chest.) What's his toy gimmick? Hey, make them neato onion rings light up, and you've got one cool figure.

2) Green Lantern (DC Heroes)—With light-up ring and snap-on emerald energy weapons a la Iceman II's snap-on oversized hands. Something cool like an energy shield and an energy bolt with a fist on the end of it.

3) Captain America (Marvel Heroes)—Spring-back waist with shield-slingin' action.

4) Juggernaut (X-Men)—A new, updated GOOD design! Really big with removable helmet and Ruby of Cytorak clear-plastic gem thing.

5) Sandman (Spider-Man)—Detachable sand-shape hands and sandpile body, kinda like the Iceman II snap-ons.

6) Tarantula (Spider-Man)—Complete with retractable boot-spikes and authentic cheesy mustache.

7) Tusken Raider (Star Wars)—With gaff-stick and official Red Rider Sand People shotgun.

8) Lobo (DC Heroes)—Spiffy-keen light-up eyes, unpleasant hooked chain and "fart-when-you-squeeze-'em" rubber bulldog.

9) Aquaman (DC Heroes)—Authentic brooding look and retractable harpoon-on-the-end-of-a-string hand.

10) Gorn (Classic Star Trek)—Armed with obsidian knife, anti-Kirk net and a big plastic boulder to get crushed under.

Hey, wanna add your two cents to the list? Tell us what figures you wanna see made (along with some neat trinket/action they perform) by posting your comments in the "Wizard World" bulletin board on America Online (hit Keyword: Wizard and look under "Toy Wish List"). Or just e-mail us at WizardTGTC@aol.com.

HOMEMADE HEROES

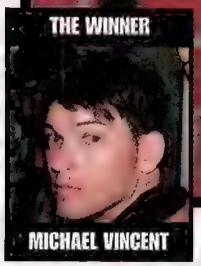
THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures (and some even from scratch!), and every one of these gifted creators will receive a Mattel toy pack and a copy of *Cyberforce* #1 signed by Marc Silvestri. The Runner-Up will get a *Codename: Stryke Force* #1 signed by Brandon Peterson in addition to the above goodies, and the megatalented Grand Prize Winner gets all that stuff *plus* a limited-edition Ballistic Polystone statue from Mattel. Congrats to everyone!

Big thanks to those funky Mattel fellas for their generous donation of prizes. You're the mustard on our dogs.

GRAND PRIZE

THE WINNER



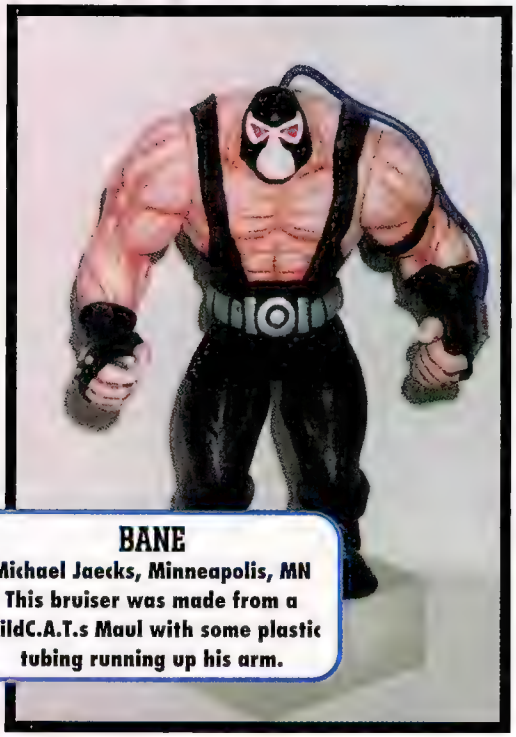
MICHAEL VINCENT

VISION

Michael Vincent, Torrance, CA

This set-up was made from a Toy Biz 10-inch Silver Surfer, cloth for the cape and a painted piece o' paper for the brick wall. (That's why it looks like he's actually phasing through the wall! Pretty cool, eh?)

RUNNER-UP



BANE

Michael Jaecks, Minneapolis, MN

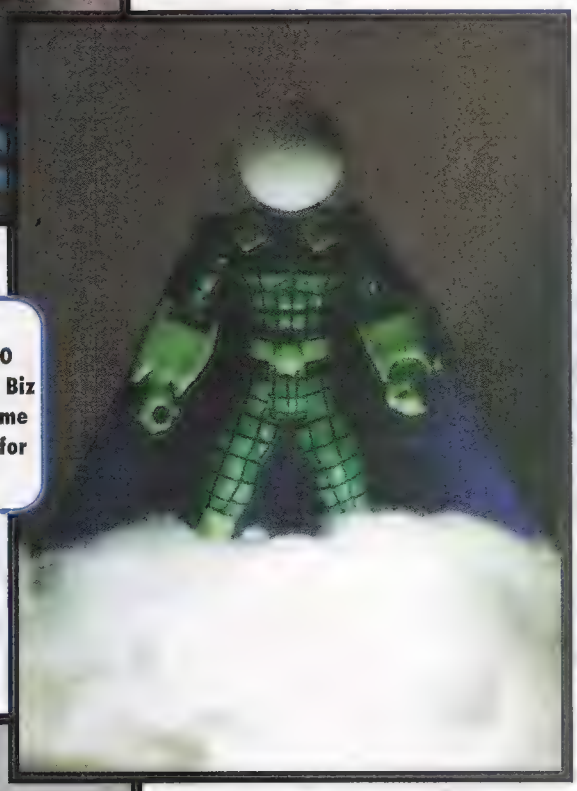
This bruiser was made from a WildC.A.T.s Maul with some plastic tubing running up his arm.

SANDMAN

Chance, El Monte, CA

This cool sand effect was made from real sand and foam. The body was made from a Toy Biz Thing, a Toy Biz Colossus head and Toy Biz Hulk arms.

SHADOWCAT
Cathy Forrest, Lauham, MD
This doll was crafted from a Beauty doll from the Beauty and the Beast line, with some simple ribbon for the belt.



MYSTERIO
Adam Feldmanis, Saint Peters, MO
This Spidey villain came from a Toy Biz Sunspot, a marble for his head, some tracking tape and plain ol' cotton for that eerie smoke effect. Neat!

MARVEL SIMPSONS HEROES
William Grover, Somerdale, NJ
These guys were hand carved and painted to look real peachy.

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

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The Back Issue Experts

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PICKS

WIZARD's must-read comic books coming out in March

MARVEL HEROES #1

Writers: Stan Lee (script) & Fabian Nicieza (plot)
Artists: N. Adams, J. Buscema, G. Colan, S. Ditko, J. Romita Sr. (pencils) & T. Austin, K. Nowlan, B. Reinhold, M. Texeira (inks). Yow!
Release Date: March sometime
Cover Price: $2.95

MARVEL Silver Age fans, rejoice! Planned as a 48-page quarterly, this new series will flesh out some of the greatest moments in Marvel history, adding new angles and showing the reactions of others affected by the adventures. Like Marvel's *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, *Marvel Heroes* offers new material without interfering with past continuity.

This first issue kicks off the series with a bang, examining the ramifications of the wedding of Reed Richards and Sue Storm, a.k.a. the Fantastic Four's Mr. Fantastic and the Invisible Girl. During that little *soiree*, attended by every Marvel hero imaginable, Dr. Doom caused 10 bazillion bad guys to attack, forcing the heroes to bring things back under control.

"I'm focusing on the reactions of people in the street to what is happening, and fleshing out the battles with the villains," says plotter Fabian Nicieza. Each chapter will focus on a different hero, with several additional storylines weaving through the tale.

Best of all, each chapter is being penciled by one of Marvel's greatest Silver Age artists! They then join together in an artistic "jam" for the final chapter, with each drawing his own feature character wherever he appears. The artists (and heroes) include Neal Adams (X-Men), John Buscema (Avengers), Gene Colan (Daredevil), Steve Ditko (Fantastic Four) and John Romita Sr. (Spider-Man).

Plus, Stan "The Man" Lee will be scripting the story, reuniting him with the very creators who helped make those early comics among the greatest ever. "This story isn't an intricate analysis of heroics in the Marvel Universe," laughs Nicieza. "It's just a way to give readers an enjoyable story and let them see these classic artists draw these characters again. It's going to be a lot of fun."

If you like *Marvel Heroes*, *Wizard* recommends you read... Silver Age Marvel comics, specifically *Fantastic Four* #1-#102 by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, and the first 100 or so issues of *Amazing Spider-Man*, done by Lee, Steve Ditko and John Romita Sr. Also try *X-Men* (Vol. 1) #56-#65 for Neal Adams' artwork on the series, *Avengers* #41-#83 and #255-#300 for great John Buscema art, and *Daredevil* #53-#100 for vintage Gene Colan art.

CONCRETE: THINK LIKE A MOUNTAIN #1

Writer: Paul Chadwick
Artist: Paul Chadwick
Release Date: March 19
Cover Price: $2.95

LEGEND/DARK HORSE Concrete, the man whose mind was put into the body of a 1,200-pound piece of stone, returns to the stands this month to kick off a six-part monthly tale that takes our hero to the scenic Northwest. There, he gets caught between a rock and a hard place as radical environmentalists belonging to Earth First! try to convince him to join their cause.

"This story is pretty epic," says creator Paul Chadwick. "There will be lots of double-page spreads and lots of geographic movement." The story focuses on four people who persuade Concrete to write about the work of Earth First! members. These activists blockade and disrupt timber operations in the region's ancient forests. Although sympathetic, Concrete doesn't want to join them because he fears it will personally backfire on him, thanks to his high-profile status.

The tale mixes suspense, humor, sexual tension (not Concrete's, for once), betrayal and an examination of the issues—but it will be painless, Chadwick promises. "I'm definitely in the green [environmental] camp, but I'm trying to give the loggers a fair shake too," he says. Fans of Chadwick's delineation of natural wonders such as Mount Everest and the Atlantic Ocean won't be disappointed either. Later in the miniseries, for instance, Concrete jumps into the ocean to avoid being confronted by loggers on Vancouver Island. "Almost all of that issue takes place underwater, so we'll see a lot of Pugent Sound sea life," he says. "There are a few digressions during the story."

Each issue also features a cover by fellow Legend guy Geof Darrow and an episode in Chadwick's "100 Horrors" short-story collection. The first short story presents a dark turn on the legend of the knight who saves a fair maiden from a dragon. "I really see these as featuring macabre whimsy, rather than horror," he says.

—Big Picks written by Craig Shutt

If you like *Concrete: Think Like a Mountain*, *Wizard* recommends you read... *Cerebus*, *Hepcats* and *Omaha the Cat Dancer*, because each of these mature-type books presents some complex issues that truly make you think.

MORE PICKS

AMALGAM COMICS

MARVEL/DC Talk about yer "What if?" tales! This Amalgam line of 12 funky-sounding books features several incredibly bizarre combinations of superheroes from Marvel and DC. For the full skinny, check out page 22. So give a few of them a chance, like *Bruce Wayne: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Super-Soldier*, or even *Doctor Strangefate*. By a whole mess o' writers, artists, inkers, colorists and all that jazz. **$1.95 EACH**

AQUAMAN #20

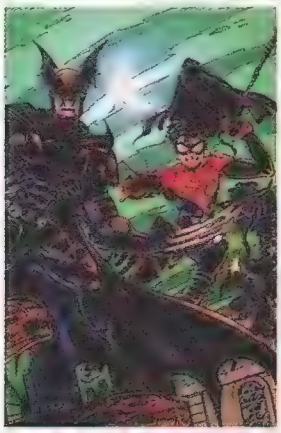
DC COMICS Water fight!!!! And we ain't talkin' weenie li'l water guns, either. It's Aquaman vs. Ocean Master (who happens to have an entire undersea city supporting him) in a wet and wild one! But Aquaman's tag-team partner Garth (That li'l Aqualad wuss?) may just turn the tide (groan) of this one. By Peter David, Martin Egeland and Howard Shum. David says, "The Aquaman versus Ocean Master rivalry has been one of the linchpins of the entire Aquaman mythos. With all of the changes in the DC Universe, that got tremendously shaken up to the point where for a while, Ocean Master wasn't his brother and I had to do some real work to reestablish the tie between the two. This two-parter is the culmination of reestablishing the Aquaman/Ocean Master antagonism/rivalry, which will be one of the driving forces in issues to come. Plus, we have a long-awaited return of Aqualad, except don't call him Aqualad anymore." **$1.75**

AVENGERS #398

MARVEL When's the last time you heard "Avengers Assemble!" and actually recognized more than two Avengers? Yeah, it's been a while since the classic team's been around, but under new writer Mark Waid's wing, you better believe *Avengers* will once again become a definite "must read." This ish sees our heroes attacked individually by a villain who knows a little too much about Earth's Mightiest Heroes. By Mark Waid, Mike Deodato Jr. and Tom Palmer. **$1.50**

BATMAN #530

DC COMICS "The Deadman Connection," Part 1 (of 3). When Gotham City gets creepier than normal, Batman finds assistance from a certain dead guy. More specifically, Deadman! Good ol' Boston Brand possesses a corpse to help the Dark Knight deal with some really nasty stuff. By Doug Moench, Kelley Jones and John Beatty. Moench says, "About 400 years ago, when Pizarro and his *conquistadors* came and conquered the Inca Empire in Peru, before the last city fell, a number of Incans fled and escaped into the bowl of a dormant volcano. They eventually built a lost city, and it's been undiscovered to this day. *Until* these mercenaries happen upon this place, and now it's like Pizarro looting the Inca Empire is happening all over again. A shaman in the city actually sends the ghosts of these Incan mummies to the outside world for help, and of course, that's what brings in Deadman. Batman is on the trail of these stolen Incan artifacts, which are being fenced in Gotham. And he can't figure out what's going on, because there's nothing missing from any museums or any archeological dig sites." **$2.50 (ENHANCED COVER); $1.95 (REGULAR EDITION)**



AMALGAM COMICS

AQUAMAN #20

AVENGERS #398

CATWOMAN #33

BATMAN AND ROBIN ADVENTURES #6

DC COMICS Didja ever read any o' those silly tabloid newspapers? Y'know, the ones where Bigfoot's feastin' on the remains of some Boy Scout out in Iowa, or the story of the man born without a head? Well, there's one paper in Gotham that says Batman fired Robin, and now like 16 gajillion costumed clowns are parading around the city hoping to fill that empty sidekick slot. And when one of the "wanna-be" Robins is kidnapped, the lives of Batman and the real Robin are at stake. By Ty Templeton and Rick Burchett. **$1.75**

CAPTAIN AMERICA #451

MARVEL "Man Without a Country," Part 2 (of 4). With his own country turning its back on him, Captain America must assume a whole new identity! (Let's see, first there was Nomad, then The Captain...hmm...he's always wanted to be...Captain U.S.A.!) On a quest to clear his name, Cap (or whatever the hell he calls himself) must find Machinesmith, or the entire world may be sent into war! We still believe in ya, Cap! (And Mark and Ron too!) By Mark Waid, Ron Garney and Denis Rodier. **$1.50**

CATWOMAN #33

DC COMICS "Hellhound," Part 1 (of 3). Y'know, with a name like

MORE PICKS

that, you've gotta be expectin' a fun-filled love story. Yeah, right! Anyways, that Catwoman babe is in the midst of planning a major league heist, when she bumps into her arch-enemy, Hellhound! You'll recognize him as that guy who caused a world o' trouble for Ms. Kyle in last year's "Year One" *Catwoman Annual*. By Chuck "Claws" Dixon, Jim "Whiskers" Balent and Bob "Kibble" Smith. **$1.95**

DC VERSUS MARVEL #4 (OF 4)

DC COMICS It's the conclusion to one of the biggest events in comics history! Those two nutty supreme beings who started this whole mess are gonna have ta finish it! This issue sees an absolute end to their rivalry, as well as the fate of the Amalgam Universe (and the Marvel and DC Universes too!). And just how does this Access character fit into everything? By Peter David, Dan Jurgens, Claudio Castellini, Josef Rubinstein and Paul Neary. **$3.95**

DEATH BY CHOCOLATE

SLEEPING GIANT COMICS No, this isn't a comic about the coolest dessert you'll ever have. It's actually a really neat story about a chocolate shop owner who's accidentally turned into a creature made of living chocolate! Society rejects him ('cause people hate and fear anything different), and in turn he wages war on humanity. But why does the FBI want him so badly? Intriguing stuff by 1995's Xeric Foundation Award winner David Yurkovich. **$2.50**

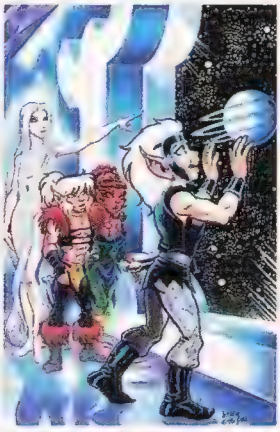
DEATH: THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE #2 (OF 4)

VERTIGO/DC Things ain't too good for Foxglove. Yeah, she's rich and famous as a rock star, but she's havin' a real bad day. First her manager dies. Then her girlfriend disappears. And then (here's the doozy), some stinkin' magazine is gonna blab to the world that she's a lesbian. Looks like ol' Foxy's gonna have to follow Hazel to Death's cozy realm to sort her life out. By Neil Gaiman, Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham. **$2.95**

ELFQUEST: SHARDS #16

WARP GRAPHICS The final issue to this series sees some serious happenings! Looks like the Wolfriders have won the war (Thanks to Cutter, no doubt!), but as you know, in war there are no real winners, only losers. (Bart Simpson taught me that!) The Palace of the High Ones is flying high again in hopes of reuniting all the scattered elf tribes, but a number of familiar characters will never be the same again! By Richard Pini, Wendy Pini and Kathryn Bolinger. **$2.25**

DEATH: THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE #2


ELFQUEST: SHARDS #16

THE FLASH #113

FOOL'S HOLLOW #1

THE FLASH #113

DC COMICS Sigh. Wally's still not back. That's okay, we'll wait. In the meantime, the new Flash teams up with Linda to investigate a suspicious "ice age" that is threatening all of Keystone City. Hey, that Linda better not be two-timin' Wally! Oooh, that'd just make us real mad! By Mark "Flash Killer" Waid, Oscar "I just draws 'em that way" Jimenez and José "I gotta hit the can in a flash" Marzan Jr. **$1.75**

FOOL'S HOLLOW #1

COPPERVALE PRESS If you're a *Starchild* fan (and if you're not, you should be!), you'll definitely wanna pick up this 48-page special. The full-color story, entitled "Seasons," tells some wondrous magical tales starring the fine folks and creatures of Fool's Hollow and the Two Penny Inn. If ya like good stories and gorgeous art, check this puppy out! By James Owen and a host of other talented writers and artists. **$6.95**

GENERATION X #15

MARVEL Talk about your family reunions! When Synch heads home to his family, he tries to kill 'em all (thanks to Emplate's evil manipulations). So it's up to Generation X to stop him from offin' his parental units. Whatever the outcome, I'd bet the farm that Synch's gonna get his sorry ass grounded for the next decade! By Scott Lobdell, Tom Grummett and Mark Buckingham. **$1.95**

HEROES #1 (OF 6)

MILESTONE/DC Hey, neat! A new Milestone book! Now that the Shadow Cabinet's gone, Donner, Blitzen, Starlight, Payback and Iota need somethin' to do. Hmm…they could start a five-person wrestlin' team! Yeah, it'd be unprecedented! Well, unfortunately, they pass on the rasslin' deal, and instead join up with Static to form the Dakota Universe's very first public team of superheroes! Check 'em out as they fight the good fight against all sorts of worldwide threats. By Matt Wayne, Chriscross and Prentis Rollins. **$2.50**

MORE PICKS

IMPULSE #13

DC COMICS Matt Murdock shows up this issue and beats Impulse into submission with his billy club. Then Foggy jumps in with a bag of Oreos and...oh, sorry. There is some new daredevil running around town, but it's not *that* Daredevil. Some wacky showoff is loose in the city, and Impulse created him. Smart kid. Now it's up to the li'l speedster to catch his creation before things get real out of control. By Mark Waid, Humberto Ramos and Wayne Faucher. **$1.75**

INCREDIBLE HULK #441

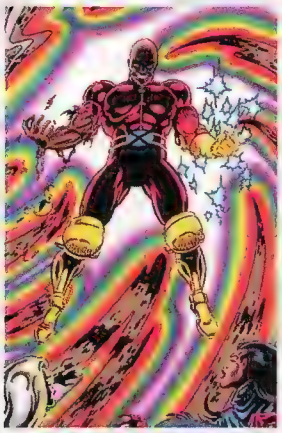
MARVEL Question: Where do you hide the Hulk? Answer: In his very own title, silly. Following the events of "Ghosts of the Future," the Hulk is nowhere to be found. She-Hulk joins the search party as the hunt for ol' Greenskin begins. Plus, Betty writes her no-holds-barred biography in..."Hulk Fiction." By Peter "My lunch is green" David, Angel "My socks are green" Medina and Robin "It's not easy being green" Riggs. **$1.95**

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #80

DC COMICS Oh, Betty! This is the BIG one. The Ultimate Battle between the Legion and the Fatal Five hits an all-time high! What's worse, the entire galaxy's been turned against the Legionnaires. Nope, definitely not good. Great stuff by Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Lee Moder and Ron Boyd. Peyer says, "This was a fun issue to get to, because it's fun to write stories where things aren't what they seem. This is still like an entry-level book, and these kids are still just getting the team together. A good jump-on point for the book would be the zero issues [of *Legion* and *Legionnaires*]. If you go back to that point, you'll get the *whole* story. That's when *our* Legion of Super-Heroes started. If you don't want to read everything, I'd go back to *Legion of Super-Heroes* #72." **$2.25**

LEGIONNAIRES #36

DC COMICS Things go from bad to worse as the Legionnaires fall at the hands of the Fatal Five. And things don't look any peachier when some mysterious reinforcements show up. Also, Cosmic Boy's plan falls apart when the Espionage Squad collapses even



GENERATION X #15

THE INCREDIBLE HULK #441

AT A GLANCE!

A listing of the high-profile books shipping in March

Action Comics #721 (DC Comics) Lottery fever hits Metropolis, and Supes looks for the culprit behind all this "good luck." **$1.95**

Adventures of Superman #534 (DC Comics) Lord Satanus shows up, and the Metropolis DMN-drug problem gets real bad. **$1.95**

Amazing Spider-Man #411 (Marvel) Part 2 of "Blood Brothers" sends some thugs gunning for a superpowerless Peter Parker. **$1.50**

The Crow: Dead Time #3 (Kitchen Sink) The conclusion to this mini-series sees Joshua's soul brought across time to avenge his family's murder from 130 years ago. **$2.95**

Fire from Heaven #1 (Image) This crossover answers all the questions about the Gen-Factor and introduces Damocles and Sigma. **$3.50**

Gen^{13} #9 (Image) The kids team up with Lynch to save a converted Fairchild from Trance's grasp. **$2.50**

Gen^{13}: Ordinary Heroes #2 (Image) The teens learn the origin of the destructive creature and must decide how and if to deal with it. **$2.50**

Grifter/Shi #1 (Image) Shi and Grifter join forces to stop Japan from entering a nuclear war. **$2.95**

Lady Death: The Odyssey #1 (Chaos!) Vandala sends a powerless Lady Death to a frigid wasteland ruled by Agony. **$3.50**

Sensational Spider-Man #4 (Marvel) Part 1 of "Blood Brothers" has Spidey's girlfriend reveal his secret identity! Plus, she's the daughter of Uncle Ben's killer! Bitch. **$1.95**

Spawn #46-#47 (Image) Tremor convinces Spawn to help him get revenge on Tony Twist, his creator. **$1.95 each**

Spawn/WildC.A.T.s #3 (Image) Spawn and the WildC.A.T.s meet future versions of Gen^{13} and the Black Razors as they prepare to take on Ipsissimus. **$2.50**

Spectacular Spider-Man #233 (Marvel) In the conclusion to "Web of Carnage," Spidey teams up with Cletus Kasady to stop the Carnage symbiote. **$1.50**

Spectacular Spider-Man #234 (Marvel) The conclusion to "Blood Brothers." Pete and Ben join forces to learn the secret of the skeleton and beat the Hobgoblin! **$1.50**

Spider-Man #68 (Marvel) Part 3 of "Blood Brothers" sees Spidey as a wanted criminal go up against the Hobgoblin. **$1.95**

Superman: The Man of Steel #56 (DC Comics) Bibbo (groan) gets a shot at the title, while the Big S discovers who's behind Metropolis' good luck. **$1.95**

Wolverine #100-#101 (Marvel) Wolverine might get his adamantium back, become one of Genesis' horsemen and help save Apocalypse. Plus, how does Elektra fit into everything? **$3.95** (enhanced), **$2.95** (regular)—#100; **$1.95**—#101

X-Factor #122 (Marvel) Sabretooth becomes an official X-Factor member! **$1.95**

The X-Files #16 (Topps) The conclusion to "Home of the Brave" sees an extremist survival group sentence Scully and Mulder to death. **$2.95**

X-Force #54 (Marvel) X-Force may be too late to save the X-Ternals from extinction. **$1.95** W

MORE PICKS

before his scheme's begun. By Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy and W.C. Carani. **$2.25**

POISON ELVES #11

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT Poison Elves? Geez, I hope it's not them li'l Keebler guys. I just polished off four sacks of Fudge Stripes. Anyhoo, Lusiphur's put in the hot seat when no one can find Lieutenant Lester. In fact, Morachi and Talon actually take Lusiphur to the mat over Lester's disappearance. By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

ROBIN #29

DC COMICS It's pretty rough killing a god. And for some reason, it's even tougher to kill a mentally unbalanced one! Looks like ol' Maxie Zeus is back and he's got a new posse. This time he's hoping to reenact the oldest crime in the world. *And*, things ain't lookin' too cool for Tim and Ariana. (First Tom and Roseanne, now this?) By Chuck Dixon, Frank Fosco and Stan Woch. **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #38

VERTIGO/DC "The Mist," Part 2 (of 4). Betcha didn't know the Sandman was a big environmentalist, huh? Well, apparently he and Ted Knight both are, since they attend a conference on alternative energy sources. But at the show, Ted shows off some glowing metal alloy that he says he can convert into an infinitely rechargeable energy source. (Yeah, riiiiiiight.) Then everyone gets all starry-eyed. By Matt Wagner, Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. This one's recommended for you mature folks. **$2.25**

SIN CITY: THAT YELLOW BASTARD #2 (OF 6)

LEGEND/DARK HORSE When the man in the Yellow Hat pushes Curious George too far, everyone's favorite li'l monkey starts flingin' feces left and right. That yellow-hatted scum deserves it too! Anyway, hours-away-from-retirement Hartigan tries to finish off that one last case, but when he's truly outmuscled and outgunned, he resorts to lyin' in a BIG way. By Frank Miller. With tons o' violence and even cussin', you better believe this fine tale is for you mature readers. **$2.95**

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #80

LEGIONNAIRES #36

ROBIN #29

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #38

SUPERBOY #27

DC COMICS "Losin' it," Part 3 (of 6). It's part 3 of Superboy's quest to lose his virginity. Actually, Knockout's been arrested by Hawaii's Special Crimes Unit, and when the li'l S defends her, all-out war ensues and the two heroes are forced into hidin' from the law! By Karl Kesel, Staz Johnson and Doug Hazlewood. **$1.95**

SWAMP THING #166

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "Trial by Fire," Part 1 (of 6). Talk about your leave of absence! It's been about a year since anybody's seen Swamp Thing, and now the government has sent Jason Woodrue down to the Louisiana bayou to find Swampy. (Remember what happened the first time he went lookin' for Swampy, waaay back in issue #21?) But Swamp Thing may be beyond salvation, and John Constantine and the Phantom Stranger have their own agenda for the Earth Elemental. By Mark Millar, Phillip Hester and Kim DeMulder. Yep, this one's suggested for you mature plant people. **$2.25**

THOR #498

MARVEL What the hell's going on with all these gods nowadays? Odin's homeless. Thor is powerless. And Venus has grown a full beard! As Thor tries to contend with his mortalness, his old pal Hercules drops by to toss a few brewskis back and chew the fat. By William Messner-Loebs and Mike Deodato Jr. **$1.50**

TYRANT #5

SPIDERBABY GRAFIX Aww, there's nuthin' cuter than a li'l baby T-Rex. Except when it's chompin' away at your flesh. Well, baby Tyrant's getting the taste of his first spring (and plenty o' blood). But even though his momma's guarding the whole brood, one o' those nasty Eggsuckers invades the nest, and all-out chaos ensues in this dramatic story. Excellent stuff by Stephen R. Bissette. Bissette says, "The chapter is called 'Dreams and Bones,' and issue #5 is the central—and often quite violent—issue [in the current story arc], with the action revolving around the nest with the newborn babies there. That said, it's not so much blood and guts as real flesh and blood concerns. The action spills over into

MORE PICKS

the sixth issue. There will also be a special back-up feature I want to mention. I'm starting a two-part article which covers dinosaur pinball machines!" **$2.95**

UNCANNY X-MEN #332

MARVEL Those wacky X-Men head out to search for Logan after his big brouhaha with Genesis in *Wolverine* #100. But the thing is, Logan is so screwed up now (hey, the guy's been through the proverbial ringer in the past year or two), no one knows if he'll greet his teammates as friends or bitter enemies. By Scott Lobdell, Joe Madureira and Tim Townsend. **$1.95**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #9

MARVEL Hey, remember Batwing, that poor kid from *Untold Tales* #2 who had these big, gross batwings? Well, he's back, and Spidey tries to help him out by visiting Curt Connors. It don't take a genius to figure out what happens next! Yep, let's just say the Lizard's back and Spidey's in a heap o' trouble! By Kurt Busiek, Pat Olliffe and Al Vey. **99 CENTS**

WILDC.A.T.S #28

IMAGE Khera sucks! That's what the WildC.A.T.s think. I mean, c'mon, it's nothing like they thought it'd be, what with the whole Daemonite War being over for years, and the 'C.A.T.s not even knowing. So the original team makes its way back to Earth, but things here at home ain't too good either. The superhero bar called Clark's is bombed, and massive warfare breaks out, with the new WildC.A.T.s caught in the wrong place at the definite wrong time. By Alan Moore, Travis Charest and Troy Hubbs. **$2.50**

X-MEN #52

MARVEL That Mr. Sinister—he's one bad dude. (And he looks a lot like Colossus, don't he? Hmm...) Anyway, he's trying to spread deadly disease across the Earth with his mutating virus. So, it's up to the X-Men to stop a virus-carrying train from literally hitting Penn Station. Plenty of mutant antics by Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Cam Smith. **$1.95** W

SIN CITY: THAT YELLOW BASTARD #2

UNCANNY X-MEN #333

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #9

X-MEN #52

WHAT I'M READING

name: **Paul Dini**

occupation: **Writer of DC's *Batman Adventures: Mad Love*, writer/producer of "The Adventures of Batman and Robin" and the animated Superman series (slated for September)**

currently reads: *"Hate,* always the high point of my monthly comics binge. I appreciate my own family more after each visit with the Bradleys. I love Jeff Smith's work on *Bone* and can't wait for Frank Miller's next *Sin City* series. I'll pick up anything by Robert Crumb, including his great—and finally available on CD—"Cheap Suit Serenaders" albums. Don Rosa's *Life of Uncle Scrooge* is fun, and Gladstone's been keeping me happy with their beautiful reprints of the classic Carl Barks duck stories. High adventure and comic melodrama enacted by waterfowl. You can't beat it."

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are February's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. THE X-FILES #1

WRITER: Stefan Petrucha ARTIST: Charles Adlard

This Topps comic based on the hottest Fox sci-fi show since "Misfits of Science" (Hey, it was a great show! Aw, c'mon...) is back in the number one hot spot! In case you've had your head stuck someplace dark and unwashed this past year or so, "The X-Files" stars those two bumbling detectives (just like Don Knotts and Tim Conway in "The Private Eyes," another quality filmatic achievement) Scully and Mulder, who continue to search for UFOs and stuff. The funny thing is, these two nitwits can never cough up enough evidence for their theories to hold any water. So in the end, Mulder looks like a big goofball, and blows any chance he has of baggin' that Scully broad.

2. LADY DEATH #1

WRITER: Brian Pulido ARTIST: Steven Hughes

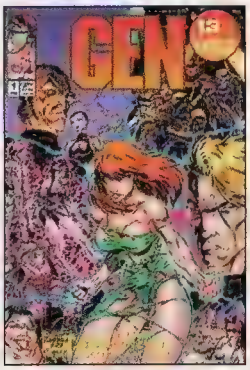
For somebody who's supposed to be dead, this white-faced controller of the Realm of the Dead (Hey, that'd look swell on a résumé!) has a longer shelf life than a box of Twinkies, which is pretty impressive, seeing as how Twinkies, next to cockroaches and polybagged copies of *X-Force* #1, are the only things that will survive the impending nuclear holocaust. Anyway, while the market is choked with Bad Girl comics, L.D. still leads the pack, outdistancing even fan-faves like Shi, Vampirella and Dawn. Why? Aside from the star's, um, testosterone-invigorating body configuration and itty-bitty li'l...costume, *Lady Death* offers pretty neat comic stories and clean, uncluttered art.

3. GEN[13] #1 (MINI-SERIES)

WRITERS: Jim Lee & Brandon Choi

ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

Y'know, everyone says 13 is an unlucky number. Yeah, those poor, half-naked if they were guys/all naked if they were girls victims of Jason's from the "Friday the 13th" flicks weren't so lucky, but what about the Munsters? They lived on 1313 Mockingbird Lane, and they always seemed pretty happy. Heck, you couldn't knock that grin off Herman's face with a bat. And then there's the whole Gen[13] bunch, who've gotta be ecstatic, seein' as how this comic came out two years ago, and is still high on everyone's hot lists! Chronicling the lives of five heroes trying to cope with their mutant powers and the trials of teenage life, this series was executed with fun writing and some of the industry's best art.



NUMBER THREE

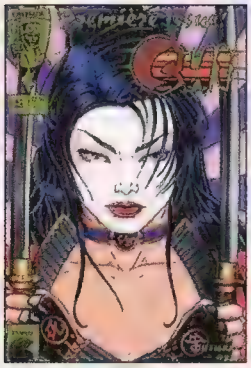
NUMBER FOUR

4. PREACHER #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis

ARTIST: Steve Dillon

Hello! Where the hell did this book come from? The tale of Jesse Custer and his quest for God (physically, not spiritually) is bringing in more and more converts every day. Aided by his ex-girlfriend Tulip and an Irish vampire named Cassidy, *Preacher* may well be the cure Vertigo needs, now that *Sandman* has ended. Caution: This title contains some of the sickest scenes you'll ever see in a comic, including a rudeness of a most severe nature being administered to an armadillo, *but* it's also one of the coolest and funniest books you'll ever see. Just pray your local comic shop's got a copy!



NUMBER FIVE

5. SHI #1

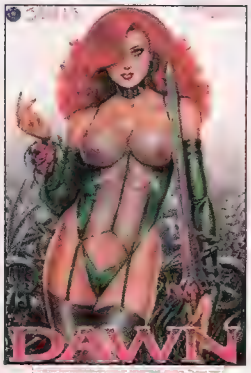
WRITERS: William Tucci and Peter Gutierrez
ARTISTS: William Tucci and Barry Orkin

"The Tooch." That's what we like to call that li'l Billy Tucci fella. Sounds kinda like some weird mafia hitman, don't it? "Hey, Mario, this job's too big for us. Send for...the Tooch." He's just this comic artist/writer guy, though, but his book, *Shi*, is and has been one of the hottest comics on the market. It chronicles the adventures of Ana Ishikawa, a powerful master of the many Japanese arts of war who is forced to battle her fellow warriors to survive. Sound neat? It is. Check it out.

6. DAWN #1

WRITER: Joseph Michael Linsner
ARTIST: Joseph Michael Linsner

It's getting tougher and tougher to write different stuff about these freakin' Bad Girl books every month, but hey, you keep makin' 'em hot and we'll keep writin' about 'em. Take Dawn, for instance. Hot babe. Red head. Runny mascara. Tight duds. Amazing body. Religious connections. Several aliases. Unlimited powers. Perceptive observer. Helps humans. Solid smarts. Loyal boyfriend. Fierce enemies. Exciting adventures. Definitely one Bad Girl worth reading about!



NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. ANGELA #1

WRITER: Neil Gaiman
ARTIST: Greg Capullo

Now, who'da thunk that one of the stars of "Who's the Boss?" would get her very own comic *and* it'd make it to the Top 10? Angela tries to bake a cake, but when Tony sees the mess she made in the kitchen, the fur really starts to fly. And just wait for the spinoff *Samantha*, which details the struggles of a college freshman who can't escape the hypnotic tyranny of her ex-boxer father. Suggested for mature readers.

NUMBER EIGHT

8. DC VERSUS MARVEL #1

WRITER: Ron Marz
ARTISTS: D. Jurgens, J. Rubinstein, C. Castellini and P. Neary

Even with its high $3.95 cover price (Lower the paper quality to standard fare, no glossy cover and charge less next time!), fans couldn't get enough of this huuuuuge crossover. Seeing Batman take on Bullseye, Robin put the moves on Jubilee and tons of other cross-company meetings finally gave fans (both young and old) what they wanted for years. There's no secret as to why this issue jumped to the Top 10. No low print runs, origins or variant covers. Just great characters fighting even greater characters that they never could fight before.

9. THE X-FILES #2

WRITER: Stefan Petrucha
ARTIST: Charles Adlard

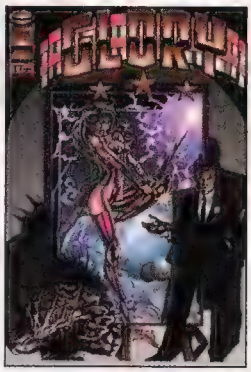
Hey! It's *X-Files* #1 again! Dammit, somebody get that damn *Wizard* Copy Editor and stick a size 9 in his...oh, wait, this is *X-Files* #2. Hey, you can't blame us for getting confused—alla these *X-Files* covers look the same. Don't get us wrong—they look cool, but geez, how many times can you draw Scully and Mulder with big pasty heads looking like Scooby and Shaggy after they've seen the groundskeeper dressed as the Miner 49ers ghost?

NUMBER NINE

10. GLORY #1

WRITER: Jo Duffy
ARTIST: Mike Deodato Jr.

Can't...do it. Can't...write about...another...chick...with a...killer...rack. Ah, heck, it's our last listing this month, so here goes: There's this chick named Glory who's this superpowered heroine in *Brigade* with some excellent stories thanks to Jo Duffy's great writing which feature plenty of demons and scumbags and cool friends of hers with superpowers, not to mention this series gives us a closer look into Glory's personal life, seein' as how it's her own series and all. Whew.

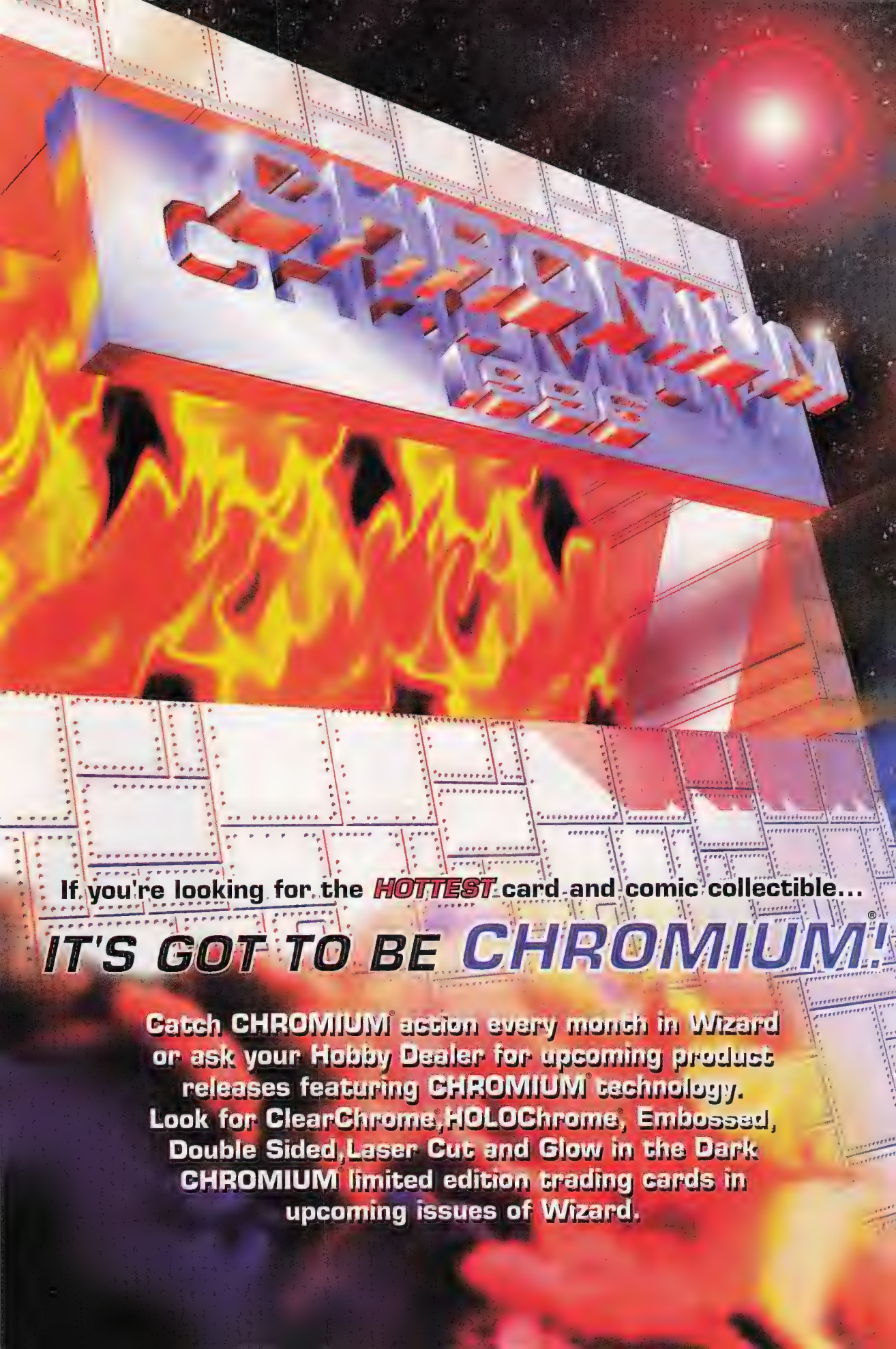


NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. SPAWN #9 IMAGE
12. WOLVERINE #75 MARVEL
13. X-MEN ALPHA MARVEL
14. VENGEANCE OF VAMPIRELLA #1 HARRIS
15. THE MAXX #1 IMAGE
16. ASH #1 EVENT
17. GENERATION X #1 MARVEL
18. SPAWN #1 IMAGE
19. LADY DEATH: B.H.A.H. #1 CHAOS!
20. LADY RAWHIDE #1 TOPPS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by Jon Warren

WHAT'S UP?

Is *Bone* going up? Is *Spawn* still hot? Should you buy a Golden Age or Silver Age book? Are back issues a better investment than new books? These are the things you really want to know. Take a look at this month's price guide for the latest on these questions and more—your worldly Wizards of all that is comics have the answers for you. We've talked to retailers, conferred with our on-top-of-the-market board of VIP advisors, tabulated the surveys from our nationwide retailer network, and distilled it all into this month's guide. So, for the latest on the state of the comics market, read on.

MARVEL VS. DC STILL ROCKING

This major mini-series pitting the two universes against one another is really turning into a scorcher. Jeff Daugherty, manager of All About Books and Comics in Phoenix, Ariz., said that at his store, they keep selling out of issue #1 and #2. Heck, look at what you get for your money and it's easy to see why: You've got Batman and Robin ganging up on Bullseye, Captain America stomping Bane and Daredevil whupping Riddler's butt in issue #1. And in issue #2, you've got Aquaman thumping Sub-Mariner, Thor knocking out Captain Marvel and the friggin' Kingpin buying out the *Daily Planet*! Then Wolverine rips off the Batmobile! What else can happen?

Jeff's not the only one laughing with glee at this title's selling pace; retailers everywhere report impressive sales, and fan interest is very high—even though the cover price is $3.95 (considered pricey for some fans) and the overall market for new comics sales this winter can only be described as sluggish. No one we spoke with is getting over cover price for these two so far, though, 'cause re-orders have been no problem as of yet.

The *Marvel vs. DC* series is setting off expected explosions in the market

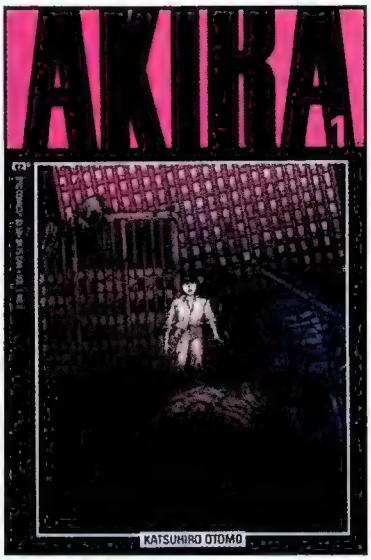
The Quick List — What's Hot in the Comic Book Market

• **AKIRA**—This one absolutely rules the manga market; collectors are snapping up back issues like nobody's business. Issue #1 moved up to $20; #2 to $11; #3 to $9.

• **AMAZING SPIDER-MAN**—Issue #1 moved up to $16,500; many other early issues followed suit. High-grade issues have become scarce on the market and retailers are reporting strong demand.

• **ANGELA**—The Special Edition that came bagged with *Spawn* #32 is a hot item, moving up to an amazing $35 this month.

• **ANIMAL MYSTIC**—Strong collector interest in the penciling work of new hot talent The Dark One, plus a steamrolling interest in the small press market, caused upward movement in the prices of this small press leader. Issue #1 moved up to $35, the #1A signed and numbered edition moved up to $65, and #2 jumped to $35; others



soared up as well. Check out the special editions and second printings listed in the guide for the first time this month.

• **CAPTAIN AMERICA**—Issues #444-#448 are hot, especially #444 (currently at $4); there's still strong demand and indications of more price movement to come, but prices on this newly successful series remain stable this month.

• **CRY FOR DAWN**—There's incredible strength in this title; low print runs and lots of collector interest spell upward price movement. Issue #1 went up to $160; #2 to $80; and #3 to $60; other issues climbed up as well. Keep watching this one.

• **FANTASTIC FOUR**—Issue #1 blasted its history-making way up to $15,000, and many other early issues followed its lead, most likely due to Jim Lee's

continued on page 102

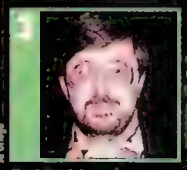
HOT FOR PREACHER

What is it about this DC/Vertigo title that has fans going ga-ga? We believe it's the in-your-face story and art, but many retailers are baffled by its popularity. Rich Conley at Heroes and Fantasies in San Antonio, Texas, said he isn't sure why, but added, "All I know is that I've got a waiting list for issue #1, and the last one I sold went for $25. Guys on the 'Net are paying $15 to $20 each for issue #1 for resale." Okay, *Preacher* fans, go and tell your local retailer what the big deal is.

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

1 Neil Gaiman — *Sandman*

2 Peter David — *Hulk, Aquaman, Marvel vs. DC*


3 Kurt Busiek — *Astro City, Untold Tales of Spider-Man*

4 Mark Waid — *Captain America, X-Men*

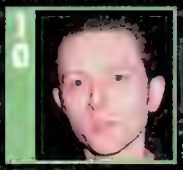
5 Ron Marz — *Green Lantern, Marvel vs. DC*

6 Scott Lobdell — *Generation X, Uncanny X-Men*

7 Chuck Dixon — *Robin, Detective Comics*

8 Garth Ennis — *Preacher; upcoming: Hitman*

9 Karl Kesel — *Adventures of Superman, Superboy*


10 James Robinson — *Starman*

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

1 Todd McFarlane — *Spawn*

2 Joe Madureira — *Uncanny X-Men*

3 J. Scott Campbell — *Gen*[13]

4 Jim Lee — *Gen*[13]*; upcoming: Fantastic Four*

5 Billy Tucci — *Shi*

6 Joe Linsner — *Dawn*

7 Joe Quesada — *Ash*

8 Greg Capullo — *Spawn*

9 Alex Ross — *Astro City; upcoming: Kingdom Come*

10 Frank Miller — *Upcoming: Sin City: That Yellow Bastard*

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS AND ARTISTS LISTS ARE DERIVED FROM A NATIONWIDE RETAILER SURVEY.

WIZARD'S UP & COMING CREATOR

PAT OLLIFFE

Garnering praise for his artwork on Marvel's popular *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, Pat Olliffe's style remarkably combines the clean, eye-friendly Spider-look of the hero's early artists with a new, fresh '90s feel. Says Kurt Busiek, *Untold's* writer: "His storytelling is very clear and modern-looking, and he has a firm grasp of the character. He's also a storytelling collaborator in every sense of the word; he brings my stories through visually better than I could've imagined."

continued from page 101

The Quick List

jumping on board the title—and making it very watchable—this summer.

• **I, LUSIPHER**—Another hot small press title, this one became *Poison Elves* after issue #10. Its prices moved up across the board this month, on a foundation of hot demand from collectors; issue #1 notched up to $40; #2 to $35; #3 to $40; and #'s 4-5 to $30; others went up as well.

• **JOHNNY THE HOMICIDAL MANIAC**—This decidedly strange title from Slave Labor is gaining some recognition among small press collectors; it debuts in the guide this month—with issue #1 at $4 and #2 at $3—and might be one to watch.

• **LADY DEATH**—The hot mama of the Bad Girls remains hot with collectors, but not enough to push prices higher than current price guide prices.

• **MILK AND CHEESE**—The cream rises to the top—what can we say? Issue #1 rose to $20; other issues are hot as well (But doesn't heat curdle milk?).

• **POISON ELVES**—Also see *I, Lucipher*. Both series of *P.E.* are moving fast, with collectors snapping up back issues big-time. All issues are up across the board.

• **PREACHER**—Possibly the hottest back issue title in all of comics right now. Fans are becoming ravenous, and retailers can't restock fast enough. Talk about hard-to-find and easy-to-sell—this one fits the bill! All issues went up in the price guide for the second straight month. It's getting to be a habit, folks.

• **SANDMAN**—Another hot Vertigo title. Issue #1 moved up to $70; #2 to $38; #'s 3-4 to $30. Many other issues in the series flew up as well, and continued strong demand bodes well for the future, even though the series itself has ended.

• **SHI**—A hot leader in the Bad Girl genre, this title remained level at current price guide prices. Retailers report steady sales at current prices.

• **STAR WARS**—The Force is certainly with all titles dealing with this classic movie. Fans are looking forward (way forward) to the new films, with the result that all the SW comics are hot. Leading the way is the original Marvel series that began way back in 1977. Prices here moved up across the board. Sample prices: #1 to $40; #1A, the rare variant, jumped up to $395; #2 to $20; #3 to $15; #'s 4-6 to $11. Hope you've got some of 'em, Jedi Collectors! ●

MARKET WATCHERS

Letters to the Price Guide

We can't print all the letters we get, so if you want an answer to your question, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope along with your letter. We still can't guarantee an answer, but you'll have a much better chance of getting a response.

Q: I've heard that some comic bags contain acids that turn the comics yellow with time. So how can you tell which bags are acid-free and which aren't? And what are the major differences? Also, is there any particular reason comic boards are laminated on one side?

—Eric Ducos, Queens, NY

A: Two types of plastic bags are commonly used in the comics business: polyethylene and polypropylene. Polypropylene is the clearer, thinner bag. Both are made from petroleum (oil), and after storing your comics for many years in either type, the oils in the bag will seep into the paper, causing it to yellow. Don't panic; it takes many years for this to happen. Both types have this seepage problem, so neither is really better than the other. Just make sure that you change your bags after a long period of time (10 years or so). An alternative (although it's more expensive) is to use Mylar bags, a product made by DuPont that the Library of Congress itself uses for its valuable documents.

The reason one side of many types of backing boards is shiny is that they have a thin coating of a buffering compound that supposedly reduces the amount of acid that gradually seeps from the board into the comic book. I don't know if it works or not, but it couldn't hurt.

Q: I have a copy of *Uncanny X-Men* #281, but I'm not sure whether it's the $11 or the $1 copy; I'm not sure what your price guide means by "Red Logo." Do you mean the word "X-Men?" Or one of the two phrases "A Mutant Milestone" and "A New Team is Born?"

—Cyrus Downey, Junction City, OR

A: A logo is the title of a book in fancy lettering, so "red logo" would mean that the title part of the cover—in this case, "The Uncanny X-Men"—would be red. For *UXM* #281, the white logo version is the first printing, worth the hefty $11.00.

Q: I have copies of *The Tick* #1 and #2, but don't know if they're the "special editions." How can I tell?

—Jon Fulks, Scottsdale, AZ

A: The Tick Special Editions are easy to identify, 'cause right there on the front cover, they say "Special Edition;" the regular #1 and #2 do not.

Q: Why don't you put *Gen*[13] *Rave* in your price guide?

Jason White, Plymouth, MI

A: *Rave* was a $1.50 cover price book that was sort of a "who's who" of the hugely popular *Gen*[13] characters. We've duly added *Gen*[13] *Rave* to our price guide as of last issue; it's worth about $5.

I hate to say it, dear friends, but it's time to go. We'll be back next month with more of the answers that you need, and we have!

—Jon Warren
The Market Watcher

Got questions? Send 'em to:
Market Watchers
c/o Jon Warren
P. O. Box 2512
Chattanooga, TN 37409
Or send e-mail directly to the guy himself:
JonRWarren@aol.com

SILVER AGE IS ALIVE AND WELL

What's with the Silver Age market this month? Lots! Retailers who specialize in this segment of the market report stronger-than-ever demand for both Marvel and DC Silver Age issues, especially key issues, first appearances and origin issues in top condition. Check out this month's price guide; it went bonkers on Silver Age. Including loads of price movement on major Marvel and DC titles; the biggest movers on the DC side are *The Brave and the Bold* and *Showcase*, both mega-titles for DC Silver collectors. In Marvel, big moves in *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four* led many other Silver Age Marvel titles towards higher value ground. As Steve Fishler of New York City's Metropolis Comics said, "Don't let anyone kid you—the Silver Age market is alive and well."

Showcase #4 runs away with one of the month's largest value jumps

JUMPS OF NOTE

The biggest jumps in value this month hit Silver Age Marvels and DCs, especially *Amazing Fantasy* #15, the first appearance of Spider-Man, which moved up to $22,500, and *Showcase* #4, the first appearance of the Silver Age Flash, which moved up to $22,000. *Vampirella* #113, the scarce last issue published in 1988 by Harris Comics, leaped all the way to $75 this month. Looks like these three'll be jumping for a while! W

Jon Warren is sure that Wilt Chamberlain could whip Bill Russell's butt any time, any place, playing one-on-one.

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of JANUARY.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for January. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's rankings. **(CE=Collector's Edition)**

Marvel versus DC #2

1. **Marvel versus DC #2 (Marvel/ DC)**
2. X-Men #50 CE (Marvel)
3. Uncanny X-Men #330 (Marvel)
4. Wolverine #99 (Marvel)
5. Spawn #43 (Image)
6. Spawn #42 (Image)
7. Gen[13] #8 (Image)
8. Spawn/WildC.A.T.s #1 (Image)
9. Generation X #13 (Marvel)
10. X-Man #13 (Marvel)
11. X-Force #52 (Marvel)
12. X-Factor #120 (Marvel)
13. Cable #29 (Marvel)
14. X-Men: Unlimited #10 (Marvel)
15. Storm #2 (Marvel)
16. Excalibur #95 (Marvel)
17. X-Men: Askani'Son #2 (Marvel)
18. Amazing Spider-Man #409 (Marvel)
19. Sensational Spider-Man #2 (Marvel)
20. Sandman #75 (DC)
21. Spider-Man #66 (Marvel)
22. Spectacular Spider-Man #232 (Marvel)
23. Tomoe #0 (Crusade)
24. X-Nation 2099 #1 (Marvel)
25. Batman #528 (DC)
26. WildC.A.T.s #26 (Image)
27. Superman #110 (DC)
28. Action Comics #719 (DC)
29. Detective Comics #695 (DC)
30. Adventures of Superman #533 (DC)
31. Superman: The Man of Steel #54 (DC)
32. Incredible Hulk #439 (Marvel)
33. Professor X and The X-Men #5 (Marvel)
34. The X-Files #14 (Topps)
35. S. Wars: Heir to the Empire #4 (D. Horse)
36. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #48 (DC)
37. WetWorks #14 (Image)
38. Superman: The Man of Tomorrow #4 (DC)
39. Robin #27 (DC)
40. Batman: Legends...Dark Knight #81 (DC)
41. Pitt #10 (Full Bleed)
42. S. Wars: Tales...Jedi—S. War #6 (D. Horse)
43. Avengelyne: Deadly Sins #1 (Maximum)
44. Catwoman #31 (DC)
45. Cyberforce #19 (Image)
46. Azrael #15 (DC)
47. Spider-Man: The Final Adv. #4 (Marvel)
48. Spider-Man Team-Up #2 (Marvel)
49. Robin #26 (DC)
50. Avengers #396 (Marvel)
51. Captain America #449 (Marvel)
52. X-Men 2099 #30 (Marvel)
53. Thor #496 (Marvel)
54. Wonder Woman #107 (Marvel)
55. Fantastic Four #410 (Marvel)
56. "21" #1 (Image)
57. Azrael #14 (DC)
58. Team 7 III: Dead Reckoning #1 (Image)
59. Venom: Along Came a Spider #3 (Mar.)
60. Catwoman #30 (DC)
61. The Maxx #22 (Image)
62. Green Lantern #72 (DC)
63. Amazing Fantasy #18 (Marvel)
64. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #7 (Mar.)
65. The All New Exiles #4 (Malibu)
66. Batman: Scar of the Bat (DC)
67. Grifter #9 (Image)
68. Superboy #25 (DC)
69. Phoenix Resurrection: Aftermath (Mal.)
70. Iron Man #326 (Marvel)
71. Glory #9 (Image)
72. Spider-Man 2099 A.D. #41 (Marvel)
73. Flash #111 (DC)
74. Backlash #16 (Image)
75. Maximage #2 (Image)
76. Green Goblin #6 (Marvel)
77. Black Ops #1 (Image)
78. Man-Bat #2 (DC)
79. Sovereign Seven #9 (DC)
80. StormWatch #32 (Image)
81. Daredevil #350 (Marvel)
82. Silver Surfer #114 (Marvel)
83. Extreme Destroyer Prologue (Image)
84. Youngblood #4 (Image)
85. Tarzan vs. Predator...E.C. #1 (D. Horse)
86. Extreme Destroyer Epilogue (Image)
87. Deathblow #24 (Image)
88. New Warriors #69 (Marvel)
89. Preacher #12 (DC)
90. Vamps: Hollywood & Vein #2 (DC)
91. Evil Ernie: Straight to Hell #4 (Chaos!)
92. Cybernary #3 (Image)
93. Punisher #5 (Marvel)
94. Aquaman #18 (DC)
95. Ultraforce/Spider-Man #1B (Malibu)
96. Vampirella of Drakulon #1 (Harris)
97. New Man #1 (Image)
98. Fantastic Four 2099 #3 (Marvel)
99. What If? #83 (Marvel)
100. GI Joe #2 (Dark Horse)

AT THE TOP:

Marvel versus DC continues to lead the market pack this year. Retailers keep stocking up on each issue of this huge mini-series, as the fanpeople can't get enough of watching their dream battles actually happen. Another X-Men event—their second series' fiftieth issue, which brought new X-foe Post to town—trailed the Marvel/DC book, but would've been #1 at any other time. Spawn proved his sales power in January by placing a whopping three books in the Top 10 (including his WildC.A.T.s crossover, which should help Jim Lee's team grab even more readers). *Sandman*'s farewell issue clocked in at its highest rating ever: #20. Will *The Dreaming*, bringing back Neil Gaiman's beloved world in April, and February's Death sequel sell as enormously well? Time will tell...

IN THE MIDDLE:

Tomoe #0—the first major non-*Shi* project from Billy Tucci's Crusade Entertainment—hit *Shi* numbers, even though Tucci isn't the artist or writer on this mini-series. *X-Nation 2099* #1, yet another new X-title from Marvel (this one stars, in effect, the Generation X of the future), finished at only #24, probably due to its high cover price ($3.95 for 32 pages) and the fact that it's a 2099 book. Retailers aren't taking risks on the struggling 2099 line, which is nearing cancellation. Dale Keown's *Pitt* has been enjoying some newfound success since Keown brought it under his Full Bleed Studios.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

Captain America leads off the second half in its highest ranking in years, as Mark Waid and Ron Garney have carried multitudes of new readers to the title, even before Rob Liefeld takes it over this summer. Malibu's getting a kiss of life before dying, with its hot *Exiles*, *Phoenix Resurrection* and *Ultra-Force/Spider-Man* books. Tarzan, of all heroes, hit #85 this month, thanks to his new Dark Horse series' still-popular co-stars, the Predators. DC's *Aquaman* is hooking new readers and reaching new heights with Peter David and Marty Egeland's exciting work.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the Wizard Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: WizardTGTC@aol.com

CBIQ

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

HEY! Yeah, you. If you think you know more about comic book history than the history of your own country, we've got a little test for you. So park your butt and start boogieing through 20 of the toughest questions put together by a group of social-lifeless fanboys.

1. Some of Spider-Man's most dangerous former foes, such as the Sandman, Prowler, Puma and Will O' The Wisp, formed what unofficial alliance?
A) The Outsiders
B) The Outlaws
C) The New Warriors
D) The Sinister Syndicate

2. Batman sent Tim Drake to Paris, France to study the martial arts under the supervision of what great martial arts master?
A) The Ancient One
B) Ra's Al Ghul
C) Rahul Lama
D) Jackie Chan

3. Storm of the X-Men was born in...
A) The United States.
B) Kenya.
C) Wakanda.
D) Genosha.

4. Which X-Force character recently graduated to the X-Men?
A) Siryn
B) Domino
C) Sunspot
D) Cannonball

5. What is the name of the man who gave the order to have Al Simmons killed?
A) Jack Whinner
B) Jimmy Wrinn
C) Jason Wynn
D) Jim Billy Joe Bob

6. Which supposedly dead girlfriend of Steve Rogers recently showed up very much alive in the pages of *Captain America*?
A) Bernie Rosenthal
B) Miss America
C) Sharon Carter
D) Diamondback

7. Which character was recently killed due to the curse of the Bloodaxe of Skurge?
A) Thunderstrike
B) Terrax the Tamer
C) Skurge himself
D) Bloodaxe herself

8. The benevolent son of the malevolent Darkseid is:
A) Omega.
B) Orion.
C) Omac.
D) Onyx.

9. As a result of "Zero Hour," who was reduced in age to a teenager?
A) Green Lantern
B) Hawkman
C) Power Girl
D) The Atom

10. What is the planet of origin of Superman's new pal Alpha Centurion?
A) Thanagar
B) Earth
C) Krypton
D) Alpha Centauri III

11. Who is the one Marvel character playing poker in *X-Men* (vol. 1) #48 who is not a mutant?
A) Spider-Man
B) Hulk
C) Thing
D) Thor

12. What unusual identifying characteristic does Krusty the Clown have?
A) the number 666 on his scalp (Scary!)
B) a birthmark in the shape of Richard M. Nixon (Scarier!)
C) a freakish fifth finger on his left hand
D) the ever-superfluous third nipple

13. Which Marvel character joined Malibu's UltraForce?
A) Juggernaut
B) Black Knight
C) The Spider-Man clone
D) Quicksilver

14. What power does Astro City's Jack-in-the-Box have?
A) He carries a mystical jack-in-the-box, from which he can release and control a mysterious energy.
B) He can jump dimensions with the use of a trans-dimensional box.
C) He has the ability to decrease in size while maintaining his full-size strength.
D) He can pop his hands and feet on springs, and shoot confetti from his fingertips. (Just like Rip Taylor!)

15. Which of the following superheroes received his powers when his future self stuck a large organic starlike membrane on his chest?
A) Darkstar
B) Starman
C) WildStar
D) Firestar

16. Which ape-babe team has an interdimensional simian scientist friend by the name of Axwell Tiberius?
A) Monkeyman and O'Brien
B) Angel and the Ape
C) Jann of the Jungle and Gorilla-Man
D) Gorilla Grodd and Mrs. Grodd

17. Pamela Anderson will be starring in an upcoming movie as what sultry Dark Horse character?
A) Ghost
B) Martha Washington
C) Pan-Fried Girl
D) Barb Wire

18. Who was never a member of the Fantastic Four?
A) Power Man
B) Ms. Marvel II
C) Human Torch I
D) Crystal

19. The original Ray and Black Condor belonged to what superteam?
A) Justice League
B) Justice Society
C) The Forgotten Heroes
D) Freedom Fighters

20. What do Mantis, Iron Fist and the original Swordsman all have in common?
A) All have been in the Avengers at one time or another.
B) They all receive their powers from the same interdimensional source.
C) All three have had their bodies duplicated into plant doppelgangers.
D) All three are members of the Free Masons and the Trilateral Commission, and are currently part of the shadow government which controls us all.

IT BEING MANGA MONTH AND ALL, WE THOUGHT IT WAS APPROPRIATE TO GRADE YOUR COMIC KNOWLEDGE AGAINST SOMETHING MANGA-ISH. SO BRACE YOURSELF AND HOLD YOUR LOVED ONES CLOSE AS WE GRADE YOU AGAINST HOW EVIL DISNEY MOVIES WOULD BE IF THEM GRAPHIC JAPANESE MOVIE ANIMATORS WERE RUNNING THE SHOW. THE MORE UNSETTLING THE FLICK, THE HIGHER YOUR SCORE.

SCORE	RANK
0-4	Prince Tetsuo inadvertently awakens the sleeping Akirella, causing Neo-Neo Tokyo to explode, but not before everyone gets halved by undead ninjas with laserblades.
5-14	Dumbo is run over by the circus train, and half his body is replaced by bio-armor that gives him psychokinetic powers, right before he's killed and eaten for meat by undead ninjas with laserblades.
15-19	Snow White has sex with all seven dwarfs, who later develop telepathic abilities and catch fire, running around screaming before being gutted by undead ninjas with laserblades.
20	Beast mauls and eats Beauty, then talks with her undead head while fighting for his life against undead ninjas with laserblades.

InQuest™ #12

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CHARACTER PROFILE: WOLVERINE

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Logan (whether this is his first or last is unknown)
AGE: Unknown
HEIGHT: 5' 3"
WEIGHT: 195 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: Black
EYE COLOR: Brown
FIRST APPEARANCE: *Incredible Hulk* #180
TITLES CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Uncanny X-Men, X-Men, Wolverine*
ENEMIES: Sabretooth, Lady Deathstrike, Genesis, Omega Red

ORIGIN

A mutant by birth, Logan was the subject of a secret program sponsored by the Canadian government to create the ultimate secret agent, Weapon X. Undergoing the program's tortuous procedures against his will, Logan had adamantium molecularly fused to his skeleton, rendering his bones virtually unbreakable. Part of the adamantium process manifested itself as three one-foot long retractable claws that projected from the back of each of his hands.

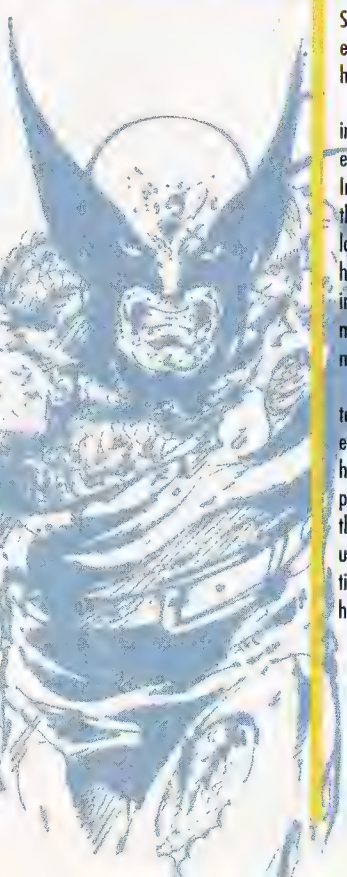
Escaping into the Canadian wilderness, Logan wandered naked with no memories of his previous life, until he was found by scientist James Hudson, the man in charge of forming Alpha Flight, Canada's government-sanctioned superteam. Recuperating quickly—due to his mutant healing power—Logan became one of Alpha Flight's most valuable members and took the code name Wolverine.

Logan later severed all ties with the Canadian government and Alpha Flight, and joined Prof. Charles Xavier's second team of X-Men, whose first mission was to locate the missing original X-Men. They succeeded and Wolverine stayed with the X-Men as a core member.

Throughout many of the X-Men's battles, Logan has been the team's last hope, fighting back from near-insurmountable odds. During such battles, Logan has had to fight to maintain control of his wild, animalistic nature which would overtake him if given the chance.

Never a team player for long, Logan has often struck out on his own, frequently ending up in some of the wildest and roughest parts of the world. On many of his adventures, he's faced some of the world's mightiest villains and heroes, battling to a victory or a standstill, proving his might as one of the toughest—if not most tenacious—fighters alive. Logan sees his solo adventures as an escape from the regimented life of an X-Man, and has even gone so far as to create a new identity for himself as "Patch" on the Pacific island of Madripoor.

Still unaware of his true origin, many of Logan's adventures have led him to sites that were significant in his past. Thanks to records he discovered, and the psychic abilities of Jean Grey, Logan has learned that many of his memories are only memory implants apparently inserted when he received his adamantium, and that the Weapon X program may have had a much darker purpose than he ever imagined.



WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

During a recent battle with Magneto, Logan's adamantium was forcibly removed from his skeleton, leaving him severely injured. Upon his recovery, Logan learned—much to his horror—that his claws were actually made of bone, not pure adamantium, when they painfully ripped out of the back of his hands.

Since the loss of his adamantium, Logan has become more feral, often giving in to his animalistic nature. During one such episode, Logan battled Sabretooth to a bloody standstill before extending a claw into Sabretooth's head, hoping to kill him.

Logan has since moved from his room in Xavier's mansion into the woods on the estate, becoming more and more withdrawn. In an ironic twist, he has come to learn that the adamantium—which he hated for so long—was actually responsible for halting his mutation at its current state, preventing him from fully mutating into a feral man-beast. Without the adamantium, his mutation has resumed.

As Logan has struggled to come to terms with his increasingly feral nature and eventual fate, he has faced distrust from his teammates and realized that he is being played as a pawn in a game much larger than he ever realized. This final game may ultimately see the return of his adamantium, or cost him the last remnants of his humanity.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

While *Wolverine* writer Larry Hama wouldn't give away any details about *Wolverine* #100 due out in February, he was more than happy to discuss post-#100 plans. "Shortly after #100, we'll see a character who is familiar to the Marvel Universe, but hasn't been seen in the X-Universe until now. This character will take Wolvie under wing, and lead him to a mountain top, which may be either physical or spiritual.

This starts the road back for Wolvie, where he can be brought back down the road to humanity. He'll find his inner Zen truth that makes him tick, something you never lose. I'm very excited about the storyline and the chance to deal with this character."

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

For newcomers to Wolverine, Hama suggests the following key books with this explanation: "I got into this business as a penciler, so the issues I like are the ones that I think work well visually, where the art and story are a true collaboration, and one doesn't detract from the other."

- ***Weapon X*** trade paperback by Barry Windsor-Smith, and ***Wolverine* mini-series** trade paperback by Chris Claremont and Frank Miller. "Those are the two high points. These are what my version of the character is based on."
- ***Uncanny X-Men* #268**—The World War II Captain America/Logan team-up.
- ***Wolverine* #75**—Logan's goodbye to Jubilee.
- ***Wolverine* #90**—The climactic fight with Sabretooth.

Wizard recommends:

- ***Uncanny X-Men* #139-#140**—Wolverine returns to Canada and Alpha Flight to tackle the monster, Wendigo.
- ***Uncanny X-Men* #133**—Wolverine is on his own against the entire Hellfire Club to free the rest of the X-Men.
- ***Uncanny X-Men* #172-#173**—Attend the wedding of Wolverine and see its deadly ramifications as he takes on the Japanese underworld.
- ***Incredible Hulk* #340**—Wolverine vs. the Hulk, no holds barred!

SIMILAR TASTES

If Wolverine sounds like your sip of java, then check out these other books, as recommended by Hama himself:

Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot and *Hard Boiled*, both by Frank Miller and Geof Darrow. "These are both major steps upwards in comics. They almost don't need the words for you to understand them, and that's something I'm striving for in *Wolverine*."

Hama also recommends manga titles such as *Dragonball*, *Dr. Slump*, *Gunsmith Cats* and *Ghost in the Shell*. He feels they tell fast-paced, action-filled stories where the reader can grasp what's going on simply by following the pictures. W

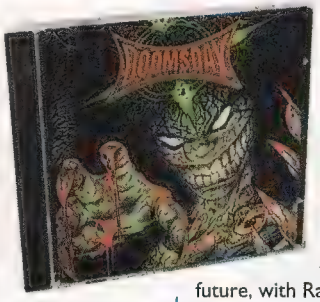
Matthew Brady, who told you all about Green Lantern last issue, found himself wandering naked in the woods once, but it wasn't part of any secret government plan, and he'd rather not talk about it.

JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything that we couldn't stretch into a full-page newsy thing

THE EVIL THAT ROCKERS DO

Are ya always looking for the perfect music to play in the background while reading comics? Well, if you read Chaos! Comics' Evil Ernie and Lady Death books, look no further! The heavy metal band Doomsday has released the CD *Doomsday: Destructive Metal Part 1*, showcasing a bloodied Evil Ernie himself on the album cover! *Doomsday* is produced by Chaos! Communications, which is headed by Evil Ernie creator Brian Pulido. The band calls its music "destructive metal" and, trust us, this album is bound to disturb your neighbors! The first song, "Inceptive Psychosis," contains sound effects that make ya feel like you've just passed through the gates of Hell. From there, things get pretty heavy. There's even a cool song called "Chaos! Rules." Look for *Doomsday* in a record store near you, and don't be surprised if the follow-up album's called *Lady Death Sings Dolly Parton's Greatest Hits*.



A REALLY RAD STATUE!

Femforce fans can now truly rejoice! Straight out of AC Comics' *Femforce* comic comes the new Rad model kit. But who the hell's Rad? Why, she's the daughter of Ms. Victory, the leader of Femforce itself. Rad's sculpture stands 14 inches tall and is sculpted by talented *Femforce* artist Brad Gorby. AC Comics is currently offering Rad's model kit unpainted (so you hard-working collectors out there can have fun painting it yourselves), but a painted version might be solicited sometime in the future, with Rad's traditional red, white and blue colors. (Hmm…think Cap's looking for a new girlfriend?) Look for the Rad model kit, retailing for about $125, to hit stores in the late summer.

NOW YOU CAN LICK THE X-MEN

No, you don't need superpowers to beat the X-Men—all ya need is a good, moist tongue! Comic Images has released a set of official Mongolian X-Men postage stamps featuring all of your favorite mutants. And these ain't just pretty pictures, either. If you happen to find yourself in Mongolia (Hey, it could happen!), you can actually use these stamps to mail letters within the country! The stamps come in a collector's set, which features a sheetlet of eight X-Men stamps, an X-Men Souvenir Sheet with Wolverine and Magneto fighting it out, and a nice display album. With a suggested retail of $10, the stamps are currently available in comic shops everywhere, or simply head out to a Mongolian post office and pick 'em up there. And all you philatelic (Look it up!) fans out there will be happy to hear that Comic Images has plans for a follow-up set starring the ever-popular Spider-Man! Heck, mailing letters has never been this much fun!

ZORK LIVES!

Oh, baby! For those of you who remember playing this awesome game back on your old Apple IIEs, *Zork* is back!

Zork Nemesis

Activision (Only the COOLEST company around when it comes to Atari cartridges!) is releasing the new mystery-adventure game *Zork Nemesis*, which uses Z-Vision. This brand-new technology offers surround perspective, thousands of animations, 16-bit graphics and more than 50 minutes of live-action video footage to bring players into a lifelike, 3-D world. And even if you haven't played any of the Zork games before, it's okay. *Zork Nemesis* transports you to a new, unexplored part of the Zork Universe—The Forbidden Lands—where you must master the science of alchemy to undo the curse of the evil Nemesis. Available for Windows 95, *Zork Nemesis* should hit retail shelves in March with an estimated retail price of $49.95.

by Steve Brown

1996: The Year of Good Games!

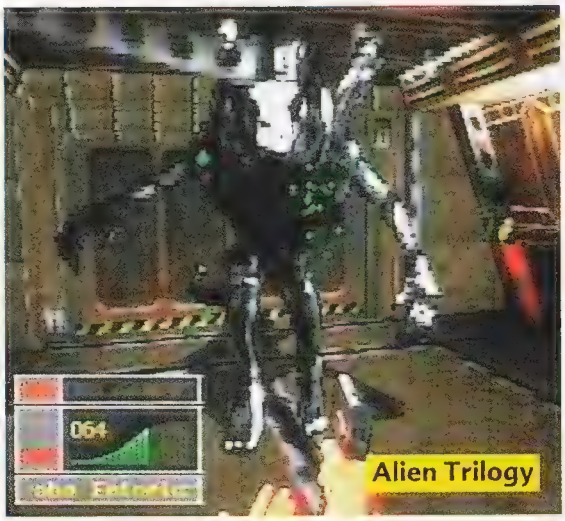
The first quarter of '96 results are in, and with over 500,000 Sony PlayStations sold, it looks like the video game industry has turned the corner. It appears all the suffering and lack of games in '95 was worth it. The wealth and quality of almost every game released this year has been fantastic. Keep in mind that most of these titles only scratch the surface; the real groundbreaking titles are still in production. This month is hopefully not an exception, as damn near every game rules.

Captain Quazar

Captain Quazar is the closest marriage between a comic book and a video game that I've ever played. A totally original cartoon character in a fresh, rapid-fire adventure, which is available now, only on the 3DO. Basically, you are Captain Quazar, the man with a big gun, big muscles and in even bigger trouble. In some outstanding overhead gameplay, you can explore over 30 levels on three planets, killing and destroying all that is unjust and cruel.

Alien Trilogy

I can hardly wait for this one; I haven't played it yet, but the *Alien Trilogy* from Acclaim looks like a must-have. Coming in April for the PlayStation and Saturn, this game has been in production for over a year. You are Ripley in a realistic 3-D first person mode. Explore 18 heart-pounding levels that encompass the three Alien movies, and blow away face-huggers, chest-bursters, dog aliens, Bambi aliens, adult aliens, security guards, company soldiers and three Queen aliens.



Alien Trilogy

Doom

All hell is breaking loose on the special PlayStation edition of *Doom*—get ready for new levels of breakthrough player excitement. Man...Williams Entertainment has pulled out all the stops and souped up the truly classic *Doom*. Over 50 levels of madness and mayhem, all the best monsters, weapons and bosses from *Doom I* and *II*, and all the classic cheat codes—plus a powerful, new cheat mode unique to the special PlayStation edition of *Doom*. Also, the spooky soundtrack is killer! This is what 32-bit gaming is all about, the utilization of cutting-edge technology for death and destruction...homicidal art.

Lobo

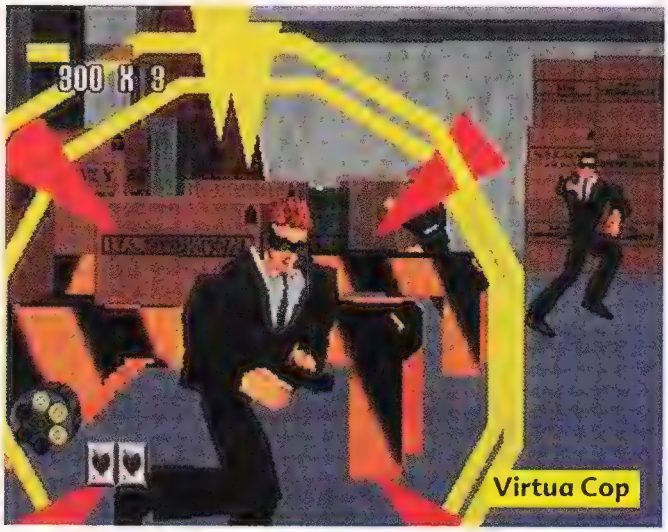
Well, I finally got a real early version of *Lobo* for the SNES, and in its present state it hit me as a major disappointment. The graphics that Ocean supplied us with totally misrepresented the game. The game I played was a very weak *Mortal Kombat* clone with merely okay graphics and subpar game play. *Lobo* features five characters, each one with over 40 moves. That galactic menace Lobo is trying to track down Robert DeNitro, Kris Krusher Kringle, V'ril Dox, Loo & Feces and the token bitch Shaola. The graphic representations of the characters are well-done, but you've played this game a hundred times before. I fought against Loo over a dozen times and I couldn't even get a glimpse of his partner Feces, even though Feces is listed in the instruction booklet!

Donkey Kong Country 2

My wife's new favorite game is not exactly a buried treasure. *Donkey Kong Country 2*, sequel to the fastest-selling video game of all time, is now available on the SNES. Actually surpassing the original in game play and graphics, it's like play-

Donkey Kong Country 2

ing a 32-bit game on a 16-bit system. In addition to more than a hundred areas to explore, *DKC2* features the first controllable female Kong character, Dixie. Dixie's powerful ponytail makes her a formidable ally. At 70 bucks, all the extra chip elements and software Nintendo has to include to get this kind of performance out of a 16-bit system makes *DKC2* the biggest bargain around. It's games like this that have helped Nintendo sell ONE BILLION video games! Since the introduction of the first Mario game, Nintendo has sold video games at the rate of nearly three per second every minute of every day for the past 12 years. One billion means one game for every teenager in the world; put end to end, these games would reach around the equator two and a half times. Nintendo's best-seller was the NES 8-bit *Super Mario Brothers*, which has sold more than 40 million copies over 12 years. People wonder why the comic book market is in such a slump...well, video games are providing unbeatable entertainment that comics in their present form can never equal.



Virtua Cop

Boogerman

He's mean. He's green. He's Boogerman—picking and flicking his way onto the SNES. Essentially a graphically superior version of the Genesis game, *Boogerman* has all the non-stop farting, burping and bodily functions that made the Genesis version a minor classic. Eccentric millionaire Snotty Ragsdale (a.k.a. Boogerman) is an out-of-practice superhero armed with only his natural defenses—such as boogers, poots, belches and loogies—who locks snot with Boogermeister and his Stenchmen. Available now from Interplay.

Loaded

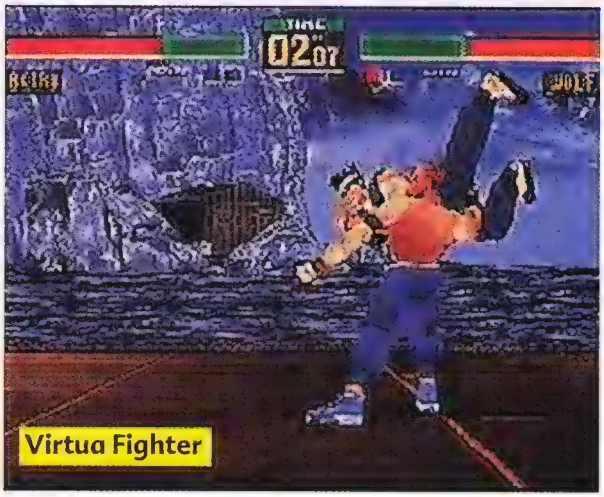
Loaded for the PlayStation is the game that I have been waiting for. A galactic shoot-'em-up game featuring two-player simultaneous action and really big and noisy guns, the best part about *Loaded* is the way your guns turn your enemies into big, bloody smears on the floor and walls. I always appreciate a messy kill, because it tells you that you have already been in that room. While the hard rock soundtrack is very well-done, it does get tiresome, and my advice is to turn the pulsating music down to avoid complete insanity. The central theme of the game is that you are trapped in the middle of a prison planet, and the insane warden is supplying you with munitions and clues along the way as you try to survive a sick game of blood-soaked chess. Needless to say, this is a must-have game for the PlayStation and is available now.

SEGA SATURN

The Sega Saturn has been fairly slow in releasing new titles, and it's beginning to be lost in the shadow of the PlayStation. What people don't understand about the Saturn is that it's a more powerful machine that's much more difficult to program than the PlayStation. However, the titles that the Saturn has released for the most part have been of quality stature, with two particular Sega-exclusive arcade hits being no exception. *Virtua Cop* and *Virtua Fighter 2* are near-perfect translations of their quarter-eating brethren.

Virtua Cop

Virtua Cop puts you in the line of fire with a stunner peripheral, which is a big orange plastic gun (Sega, keeping up with its bloodless Virtua world philosophy, naïvely refuses to call it a gun). Featuring a first-person point-of-view in 3-D, revolutionary polygonal graphics and a zooming camera, *Virtua Cop* is a blast!



Virtua Fighter

Virtua Fighter 2

VF2, the sequel to *Virtua Fighter*, has twice the speed, polygons, resolution and frame-rate of the very rushed original version. Quite simply, the finest fighting game on the market today.

Digital Pinball

One genre that has been elusive to duplicate within the boundaries of the video game has been pinball. It took 32 bits and scores of lousy pinball video predecessors, but someone has finally done it. Time Warner brings us *Last Gladiators: Digital Pinball* for the Sega Saturn. The pinball experience is wonderfully recreated, thanks to a 3-D perspective and realistic graphics, plus all the fluid ball motion, sounds and controls needed to make the game act and feel like the real deal. *Last Gladiators* features four different machines and a driving rock music soundtrack. This bodes very well for the future of pinball video games!

JOHN BYRNE

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO ME

"What was it about Batman? Why did he seize my six-year-old attention so firmly, so irrevocably?"

The other day I was continuing the endless job of moving stuff to my current studio space, and I decided it was time to move the only comic book I actually have hanging on the wall. It's *Batman* #91 and, before you seek the historical significance of that particular issue, let me tell you there isn't any. Not to anyone but me, anyway.

That issue contains the very first Batman story I ever read, "The Map of Mystery," although that is not where I read it. I originally read it in a British reprint comic.

Now some personal history. When I was a lad, my parents moved all the time. Until I was 16, I never had two Christmases in the same house. I went to nine schools in 11 years. Very bad, as far as getting a consistent education or forming lasting friendships, but very good if you are feeling nostalgic and want to start placing things in their proper position chronologically. I can "tell time" by where I lived. If it was in this house, it must have been 1964, but if it was this apartment it would have been 1957.

Feeling homesick, my mom and I briefly returned to England, from Canada, in August 1955, though it would not be until the following March that my father was able to join us. All our meager savings went on the tickets for mom and me. I started school in England, at age five, and was reading well enough by the beginning of 1956 that I was able to scan the *TV Times*. One day I noticed a new listing, "The Adventures of Superman." I watched and was hooked.

A few weeks later, I encountered Superman in another form; a book with Superman on the cover. More exactly, a drawing of Superman. Now I learned what his uniform looked like in color! I persuaded my mother to buy me that book—hardcover, and all in black and white. It reprinted stories from the American comics. In that volume, I also met Rex, the Wonder Dog.

Some time after that, what was a mild infatuation for comics turned into full blown addiction. I found another reprint comic, this time in color, which contained three stories. One was a Superboy tale, and it was this that caught my attention. The other two were a Jonny Quest story and...Batman.

What was it about Batman? Why did he seize my six-year-old attention so firmly, so irrevocably? The art was by Dick Sprang (the only comic professional whose name is a sentence), and it was most likely written by Bill Finger. The story involved Batman and Robin locating a hidden treasure map. The splash featured an imperiled Robin hanging from the side of an enormous globe—he had been literally climbing the Andes mountains sideways!—as a masked, plainclothed bad guy stomped on his fingers and Batman swung up to the rescue. The thing that struck me, grabbed me, was the way Batman's shadow fell on the globe behind him in exactly the same shape as he, as if two Batmen (Batmans?)—one in color, one all in black—were swinging up to save the Boy Wonder.

So, I did the math. It must have been late in 1956 when I read that Batman story for the first time. I know it was fall or winter, from the way I remember being dressed. (Yes, it was one of those events that imprinted every detail in my mind.) Which means, come 1996, I shall have been reading comics for 40 years! Mostly because of one story.

And I have to wonder—doing my very best "bitter old man" impression—how many of the kids buying comics today, buying chromium covers and plastic wrap and artificial "events" will be here in, oh, 2036, still reading, still collecting, and still able to point to a single, magical moment that got them started.

I'll be 86 years old then, if I am still alive. And if there is some kind of benevolent force in charge of the universe, I'll still be doing comics, in one form or another.

And still loving it.

Comics veteran John Byrne currently writes and draws Wonder Woman *for DC Comics.*

bullpen

THE NIGHT THE LIGHTS WENT OUT IN MONTROSE

Our star goalie separated his shoulder before the game. Half our offense couldn't make it. Half the *defense* couldn't make it. The lights blew, plunging the arena (read: gym) into darkness. And we almost won.

Well, okay, everything but the last part is true, but we tried. Led by Managing Editor Scott Gramling, the Wizard Press floor hockey team, known as the Wizards (...ugh...), was ousted from the playoffs by the goons on the X-107 team (a local radio station). "It sucked," grimaced head honcho Gramling. "I looked up at the scoreboard and thought it was malfunctioning. Then the lights went out. There oughta be an investigation."

The final score of the game: 11-1. We'll be back, though, and with two magic words: high-stickin'.

RESOLUTION CALLING

Here's a look at the New Year's resolutions we stuck with, and the ones we already blew:

Dan Reilly—Stuck: "Not gaining weight, by passing all the cookies and cakes my wife makes to my fellow employees." Blew: "Not getting angry at stupid things."

Bob Marshall—Stuck: "To be one with my rabbit." Blew: "My nutrition kick, because I eat all the stuff Dan brings in."

Jim McLauchlin—Stuck: "To get some more often." Blew: "To get a dog. I haven't gotten a dog yet."

Buddy Scalera—Stuck: "Not to spend half my salary in the vending machine at work." Blew: "To tolerate stupid people."

Brian Cunningham—Stuck: "To exercise more." Blew: "To start the Wings Hauser Fan Club."

Andrew Kardon—Stuck: "Eat more cheese." Blew: "Stop using *Wizard* to promote Twisted Sister and Dee Snider. Who, along with Captain America, rule."

Marc Wilkofsky—Stuck: "To be more laid-back and less hyper." Blew: "To totally avoid junk food. I also blew resolutions #3 through #8."

Pat McCallum—Stuck: "To whip the crap out of every midget that crosses my path." Blew: "To avoid seeing Bob become one with his rabbit."

THIS MONTH'S HAPPY THING

Just 99 cents? Are you sure? WOW! In case you've been blowin' your cash on those $2.95 monthlies, you're missin' the boat! Marvel offers a number of 99-centers each and every month, and guess what? They're some of the best comics out there! Check out *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* by Kurt Busiek—one of the BEST comics currently on the planet—as well as Fabian Nicieza's work on *Professor Xavier and the X-Men*, which tells some fine early tales of your favorite mutants. Highly recommended!

MORT OF THE MONTH

AQUARIAN

Oh, my...it's Jesus! We've accidentally stuck Jesus in "Mort of the Month!" Oh, man, we are so screwed. Once God reads this, he's gonna freak and...waitaminnit, that's not Jesus. It's that loser Aquarian from old *Marvel Two-in-One* issues and stuff. Man, that was close. Anyway, this ass-loaf is an alien who was rocketed from his homeworld when his dad thought the planet was gonna blow (Hey, does DC know about this guy?). Crashlanding on Earth with the ability to suck, he was quickly shuffled off to comic limbo along with Howard the Duck and Slapstick. He's got a cool song, though.

MORT-O-METER:

ON SALE NOW

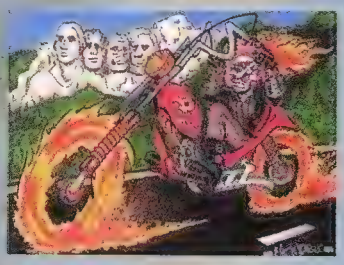
InQuest #12

More fun than sliding midgets across an icy highway comes the twelfth steaming issue of *InQuest: The Guide to Collectible Card Games*. Beneath this issue's **gargoyle photo cover**, you'll thrill to the **official *Magic* rule clarifications** to banding, rampage and trample, a super in-depth interview with *Illuminati* ringleader Steve Jackson, **behind the scenes of *Marvel OverPower***, how the mythology of dragons originated and evolved, **tips for building killer decks** and all sorts of other neat stuff. Also stuffed in this ish is a **staggeringly huge (about 6" x 9") Chaos Orb *Magic* card**. An exact (but bigger) replica of one of the most powerful cards in *Magic*, none will be able to stand before you when you're armed with this badboy!

Such an awesome book, it'll destroy the minds of the weak, and it's only **$3.99**!

CONTEST WINNERS

These are the groovy Grand Prize winners of some past *Wizard* contests. Congrats, people!



GHOST RIDER MOTORCYCLE, ISSUE #51

This blazin' depiction of what Ghost Rider's cycle should look like is by Matthew W. Daigle of Rapid City, S.D.! He wins a giant-sized poster of the real GR Harley-Davidson cycle, signed by its painter Bill Sienkiewicz! Ride on, Matthew!

SPIDER-MAN FIGURINE, #51

Ryan Ward of Wickliffe, Ohio, is the lucky recipient of a 9"-tall sculpture of Spidey, by Randy Bowen! Go, Ryan!

MISSING LINK, #49

Allen Twitchell, of Coffeyville, Kan., is the winner of our final Missing Link contest! He figured out that "Shut up and kiss me" was said by both Cable in *Cable* #20 and Phil in *Marvels* #1, and "Shut Up and Kiss Me" is a song on Mary Chapin Carpenter's *Stones in the Road* CD! He wins an *Avengers* #16—be proud, Allen!

next month

TOP TEN

Top 10 Marvel/DC character amalgams we'd like to see

10. Nick Fury of F.I.R.E.S.T.O.R.M., the Nuclear Man
9. Big Barda Ray Bill
8. Silver Streaky the Surfer Cat
7. Legion of Substitute Secret Defenders
6. Blue Devil Dinosaur
5. Man-Batroc the Leaper
4. Archangel and the Ape
3. Martian Man-Thing
2. Superman's Pal Fin Fang Foom
1. Scarlet Sandwitchman

C.B.IQ. ANSWERS

1. B	6. C	11. C	16. A
2. C	7. A	12. D	17. D
3. A	8. B	13. B	18. C
4. D	9. D	14. D	19. D
5. C	10. B	15. C	20. C

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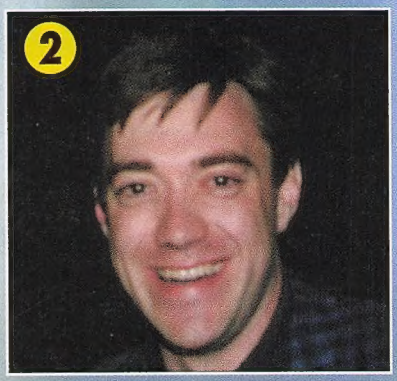

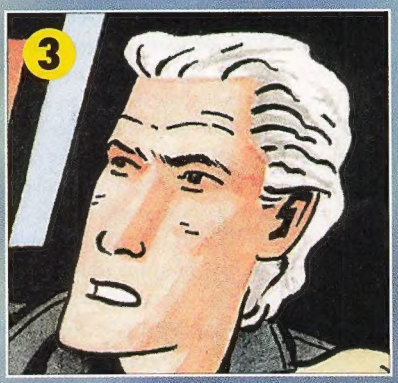

1. Toy Fair '96
We bring Toy Fair, NYC's annual gala event, straight into your hands. Learn what new toy lines you'll be seeing throughout 1996, what characters will finally see the light of day as action figures and what toy lines got the axe.

2. Dan Jurgens
A one-on-one chat with comic writer/artist Dan Jurgens, as we learn what it was like killing Superman, the pros and cons of erasing the DC Universe and what went wrong between him and Marvel.

3. Kane
Get the lowdown on *Kane*, one of the best self-published comics out there. Done in a cool *noir* style by Paul Grist, find out why this underrated book has some of the most textured heroes and villains in comics.

4. Crow sequel contest!
We tell you how you can win a private screening of "The Crow: City of Angels" for you and 50 of your friends! You can also score some Crow movie posters, autographed comics, polystone statues, vinyl model kits and more!

Wizard #57
Special Toy issue!
On sale in March

WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

GARY FRANK

Success...for Gary Frank, luck has had a lot to do with it. But the 26-year-old British pencil pusher is quick to point out that, once luck kicks in, the nature of the business takes over. "When it starts happening, it's like a snowball effect," he explains. "One minute you're struggling to get work, and the next, everybody wants you. The more work you get, the better the work gets, and that's when people start noticing the work and you."

People are definitely starting to sit up and take notice. The young Briton is currently head over heels into the Marvel/DC crossover book *Bullets and Bracelets* and, aided and abetted by writer Peter David, is jump-starting a new take on Supergirl for later this year. Frank is a very busy worker these days, and his low-key attitude runs contrary to his high-profile popularity. "All I worry about is doing the best job I can and making things look right."

Gary Frank, born and raised in Bristol, England, was a Marvel kid by choice as well as circumstance. "We had one store that would get Marvel imports. They would keep them for months, until the pile would go down, and then they'd order some more. I was aware of DC, but they were real hard to find."

Photo by Al Ortega

Frank hit the streets after the British equivalent of high school with ample talent as an artist, but no clear game plan. "Initially I thought I would go into some kind of fantasy illustration. But I bought a few comics and rediscovered everything I liked about them as a child, so I thought that was probably the direction for me."

He hit the convention circuit, "but people didn't show much interest in my stuff." Eventually Frank rang up Marvel UK, one of the only games in town, and the company told him to bring down his portfolio. The penciler at first broke in with some Marvel UK *Thundercats* work and "some bits for a [British] X-Men annual," before getting what he describes as "my big break" in 1992—the first six issues of *Motormouth*. What followed was a telephone call with a two-pronged request of him: an illustration to adorn *The Incredible Hulk* #400 and an assignment as an ongoing pencil guy on the Hulk title itself. "Of course I said yes," deadpans Frank.

His Hulk work eventually translated to further work on this side of the Atlantic. He followed with the *Black Canary/Oracle: Birds of Prey* one-shot, the recent *Sabretooth Special* and some work on Malibu's *Godwheel*. The aforementioned *Bullets and Bracelets* and Supergirl revival are currently filling up Frank's plate.

With steady work in the offing, Frank, at a time when comic book employment is riskier than ever, is not worrying. "The only time I worry is when a deadline is coming up and I've been slacking off. Needless to say, I don't worry too often."

by Marc Shapiro

First comic read...
A Marvel UK reprint of a Spider-Man book.

Favorite comic of all time...
I can't even remember the title, but it was this Angel team-up thing. I don't even recall if it was good, but it does stick in my mind.

Favorite work of your own...
The Black Canary comic, without a doubt.

The one person you would like to meet...
Reed Richards of the Fantastic Four. He seems like he'd be a real interesting bloke, and he could probably start my car when it isn't working.

Superpower you would most want...
I quite like the idea of being able to shapeshift.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....
If I'm up at 2 a.m., I'm probably drunk, so it would probably be a kabob.

Favorite toy as a child and an adult...
As a child, my Six Million Dollar Man action figure.
As an adult, my car. I love it so much that I put it in the *Black Canary* book I did.

Stuff you collect...
Tropical fish

Person who would play you in a movie about yourself...
I don't know. I'd probably have to be animated.

Favorite cartoon...
Batman: The Animated Series

Person you would most like to work with...
Peter David, who I actually worked with on *Hulk*. I suppose Alan Moore would be another good one.

Favorite musical artist...
The Breeders

Favorite TV show...
An English comedy show called "Shooting Stars."

Last good movie you saw...
"Patriot Games"

Last good book you read...
The Old Man and Mr. Smith, by Peter Ustinov

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